

BEING HUMAN SERIES 5 **FIRST INTERVIEW**

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LEAGUE MOVIE
IS A WASTE
OF MONEY"**

Mark Millar on Bryan
Singer and the future
of comic-book movies

EPISODE VII WORLD EXCLUSIVE

**STAR
WARS**

Why you'll see three films
a year – insiders on
Disney's new hope

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// TRUE BLOOD
// MAN OF STEEL
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// THE
WALKING
DEAD

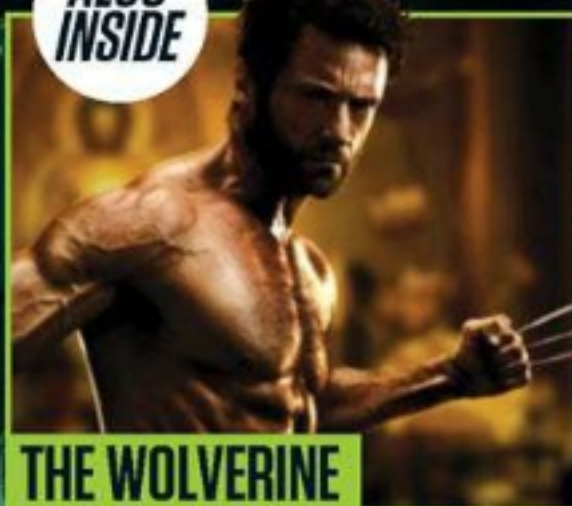
THE SUPERHERO REBORN

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have been

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JJ Abrams



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Matt Smith on Series 7
and the new companion



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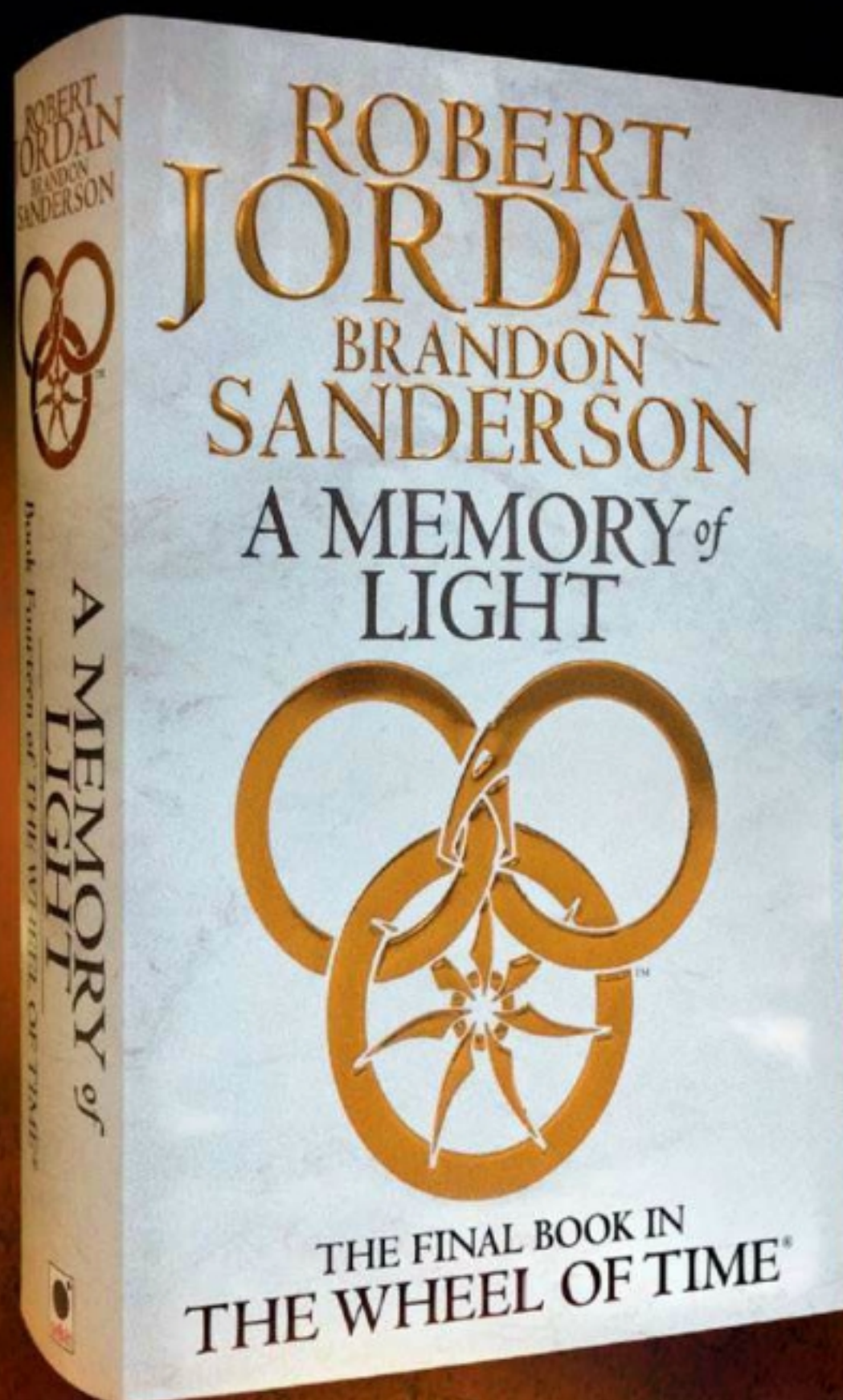
ISSUE 75

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The Wheel of Time's final revolution has begun.



8 JANUARY 2013

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There are two observations made in this issue by Mark Millar, the superhero answer to Mr Wolf in *Pulp Fiction* – called in to clean up the blood-splattered seats of 20th

Century Fox's Marvel movies – that really sticks with you when you flick through this copy of SciFiNow.

"We're living in the world we always dreamed of, where everyone is superhero literate" and "the guys who grew up reading comics are now the ones making the movies," and every hotly tipped comic-book property making a break for mass appeal, from The CW's masked melodrama *Arrow* and Hugh Jackman and James Mangold's Samurai noir *The Wolverine*, to Zack Snyder's backwoods *Man Of Steel*, has clearly been the beneficiary of this altered paradigm.

We now have people at the heart of adapting some of our most beloved properties who understand on a fundamental level that fidelity to the spirit of a much-adored geek icon is far more important than fidelity to the letter of his convoluted origin story or labyrinthine family tree.

Equally importantly, the flat scans – as they'll be called come the Age of Apocalypse – don't need to be spoon-fed superhero 101 every time a new blockbuster premieres or a TV show debuts. They're now so conversant in the language of origin stories, secret identities and arch-nemeses that those small and large screen morality plays we're getting so excited about are given the green light and the greenbacks to happen in the first place.

As Mark Millar says, "It's what we've always dreamed of."

James

James Hoare
Editor

GET EXCITED ABOUT WARM BODIES

We've seen the softer side of all sorts of supernatural beasts, but never a zombie. It's so hard to love someone who clearly looks deceased, is totally unintelligible and such a messy eater, but *Warm Bodies* says "to hell with that." Nicholas Hoult plays 'R', a zombie who shuffles mindlessly through dystopian America until he meets Julie (Teresa Palmer) and starts to feel something in his chest. This promises to be a scary, funny and sweet take on the walking dead.

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"I'M LIVING
THE DREAM
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Q. Who's your underrated superhero of choice?



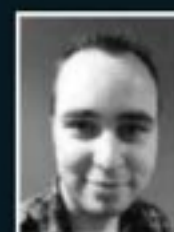
James Hoare Editor

A. Animal Man
Family guy, eco-warrior and, er, life elemental thing, he's more grounded than your average cape.



Jodie Tyley News Editor

A. Union Jack
Give us a movie about our national hero, the half-geezer, half-super spy Union Jack. #TrueLad.



Steve Wright Sub Editor

A. Cannonball
Been around for ages – surely has to be a shoo-in for *Days Of Future Past*? Or is it just me?



Stephen Kelly Writer

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The Complete Guide

SciFiNow | 005

SciFiNow THE HOTTEST **NEWS** FIRST

PORTAL

Your essential,
trustworthy and
unrivalled guide
to the latest
genre happenings

NEWS



“WE KICK OFF WHERE
WE LEFT OFF - WITH
HAL TIED TO A CHAIR
KATE BRACKEN”

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The low-down on the much anticipated Battlestar Galactica prequel

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MONSTER HOUSE

BEING HUMAN IS BACK

WORDS JODIE TYLEY

The new cast tease big things to come in the fifth series

The welcome mat is laid out at Honolulu Heights for another year. When *Being Human* returns for its fifth series, nothing much has changed between vampire Hal (Damien Molony), werewolf Tom (Michael Socha) and new ghost Alex (Kate Bracken). "We kick off where we left off – with Hal tied to a chair," reveals Bracken, "and Tom and Alex are deciding whether or not it's time to let him out, whether he's safe or not."

At the end of Series Four, Hal succumbed to his bloodlust, and the newest tenants are taking care of him. It's not like this behind the scenes, however, as Molony tells us. "Our first day they had to feed me mashed banana. I hate bananas anyway, and Michael was purposefully getting it all over my nose and cheek, and there were eight takes of it. I was like, 'Surely we got it now?!'"

Without Hal's OCD cleaning, the house has gone to pot, and so have their jobs at the café. Now, Hal and Tom have ventured into the hotel business, landing roles at The Barry Grand, the same seaside hotel that houses this year's big bad.

BAFTA-nominated actor Phil Davis, who appeared in *Merlin* as the man who mortally

wounded Uther Pendragon, has been cast as hotel lodger Captain Hatch. He's described as "bitter, manipulative, obsequious and cruel," trapped in a failing body and harbouring a secret "that could rattle your soul with fear".

Davis tells us what appealed to him about the part. "I read an early draft of the last episode, which is the best for Captain Hatch, and it was irresistible and awful. That's the thing about this show; it's quite gory and grown-up, but it's very funny and hip at the same time. It's a lovely combination, and Captain Hatch chimes in with all of that."

The last series was dominated by the threat of the Old Ones, a band of ancient vampires headed up by a veiny Mark Gatiss. Creator Toby Whithouse has confirmed that the first episode will tie the loose ends of their story and move on, but there will be a reprisal for Mr Rook (Steven Robertson).

We last saw the mysterious Rook taking away Alex's body and removing all evidence of Tom's public transformation. Molony confirms that he can't be trusted, "He has such an agenda and you never know whether he's good or bad, but he comes to the fore this series as a threat and as a help to us," he reveals. "It's really uncertain until the end."

Keeping true to the tone of the show, there will be jokes among the blood and maggots, as Molony continues, "There are great moments of comedy, whereas last year there was an impending doom of 'The Old Ones are coming,'" he says. "What I like about this series is that the big bad – the menace – is so much more subtle and under their noses right from the very start."



Phil Davis as the "bitter and manipulative" Hatch.

Being Human's fifth series returns to BBC Three in early 2013.

SUPERMAN BEGINS

MAN OF STEEL: IT'S 100% SERIOUS

"There's absolutely no winking" says director Zack Snyder WORDS JODIE TYLEY

You will believe a man can fly when *Man Of Steel* arrives, according to screenwriter David S Goyer. The new trailer, currently being shown before *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*, reveals an almost *Batman Begins*-esque approach. It's not surprising when you consider the story was plotted by *The Dark Knight* director Christopher Nolan and writing partner Goyer.

"What Christopher and I have done with Superman is try to bring the same naturalistic approach. We want our stories to be rooted in reality, like they could happen in the world we live in," Goyer told *Bad Taste*.



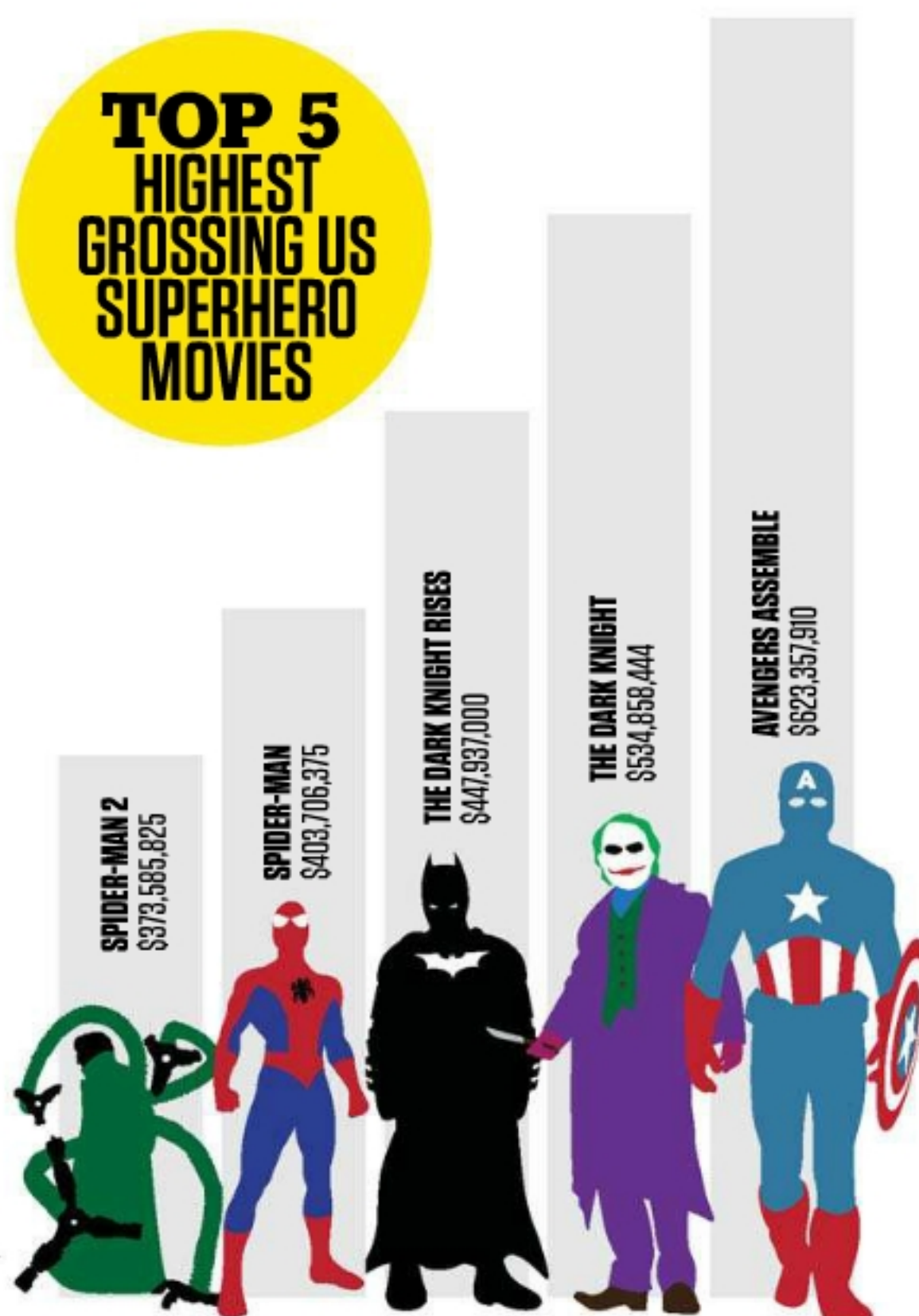
He says they considered what would happen if a story like this was real. Clearly, we're going to see those who worship him, and others who take a more militaristic approach. Not helping will be General Zod, played by Michael Shannon, although the actor has denied that he'll be asking the Last Son of Krypton to kneel before him like in Richard Donner's *Superman II*.

Zack Snyder is pleased with Shannon's portrayal. "You could get actors who go, 'It's Zod, it's not 100 per cent serious,' or [you can play it] slightly with a wink; there is none of that with him," he tells *MTV*.

It could be the last opportunity for Superman to prove he can work on the big screen. *Superman Returns* grossed only \$200 million in the US compared to its estimated budget of \$270 million. Snyder says *Man Of Steel*, on the other hand, will be "an opportunity for audiences to have their heroes taken seriously."

Man Of Steel will be released on 14 June 2013.

TOP 5 HIGHEST GROSSING US SUPERHERO MOVIES



UNHOLY NIGHT

"RESPECT THE ABSURDITY" OF BEETLEJUICE 2

Writer Seth Grahame-Smith is definitely not ordering Hawaiian



Seth Grahame-Smith is one of the most in-demand writers in Hollywood, having worked with Tim Burton to bring *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* and *Dark Shadows* to the screen. Warner Bros recently splurged \$2 million securing the rights to his latest book, *Unholy Night*, and his next assignment is to pen the sequel to *Beetlejuice*.

"The thing that scares me – and the thing I love about *Beetlejuice* – is there are very few ways to get it right and a whole host of ways to get it wrong."

The original premise – *Beetlejuice Goes Hawaiian* – certainly seemed that way. "It would have been a strange experience," Smith laughs. "I'm not sure it would have worked, but Tim [Burton] wanted to shoot it like one of those old Sixties teen surf movies, and Beetlejuice wins a surfing contest.

That's the thing with *Beetlejuice* – you have to respect the absurdity of it all."

It's not the first time Smith has thrown himself at a well-loved property, having helped bring *Dark Shadows* to the big screen. "I'm not sure people knew what to make of the movie," he says. "We were warning people it was a mixed bag of strange. It's the same for *Beetlejuice* in a way, because *Dark Shadows* certainly had its legions of fans who were expecting something specific, and with *Beetlejuice* there's even greater pressure. You have to write something that excites you personally. I'm sure in a

year's time we'll be talking about how horribly wrong it went, but for now I'm optimistic."

Unholy Night is available to buy now.





FIVE THINGS WITH CHLOË MORETZ

The teen genre queen talks vamps, Carrie and Kicking-Ass

INTERVIEW JOE NAZZARO

1 Hit Girl's back

15-year-old Moretz is returning to wreak bloody havoc as Hit Girl in *Kick-Ass 2*. She may have lost the pigtails, but she's gained a customised vehicle: the purple, lethal-looking Hit Cycle. "I think *Kick-Ass 2* is more... I don't know, it's just more," she tells us. "For my character it's not as crazy because she's growing up... There's more of an idea of who you are when you're going to high school and trying to figure it all out."

2 Missing The Mask

Kick-Ass' latest recruit is Jim Carrey as Colonel Stars, a founding member of crime-fighting group Justice Forever. Without her Big Daddy (Nicolas Cage), Moretz is missing out on the fun this time around. "In the last one, it was me and Nic Cage, and Aaron [Johnson, who plays Dave/Kick-Ass] wasn't working with Nic," she says. "In this one, Aaron is working with Jim and I'm like, 'Noooo!' But he's crazy and fun and doing a lot of rad stuff with the character."

3 Interview with the Vampire

Playing a pint-sized killer is nothing new to Moretz, but in *Let Me In* she had to play a murderer beyond her years. "[Director] Matt Reeves gave me a journal and asked me to write in it, so every night I sat in bed and wrote this back story for her," she says about Abby, the centuries-old bloodsucker. "Imagine being 300-years old and forgetting your parents and family, and everyone you knew and loved will die while you still live forever."

4 Would-be Werewolf

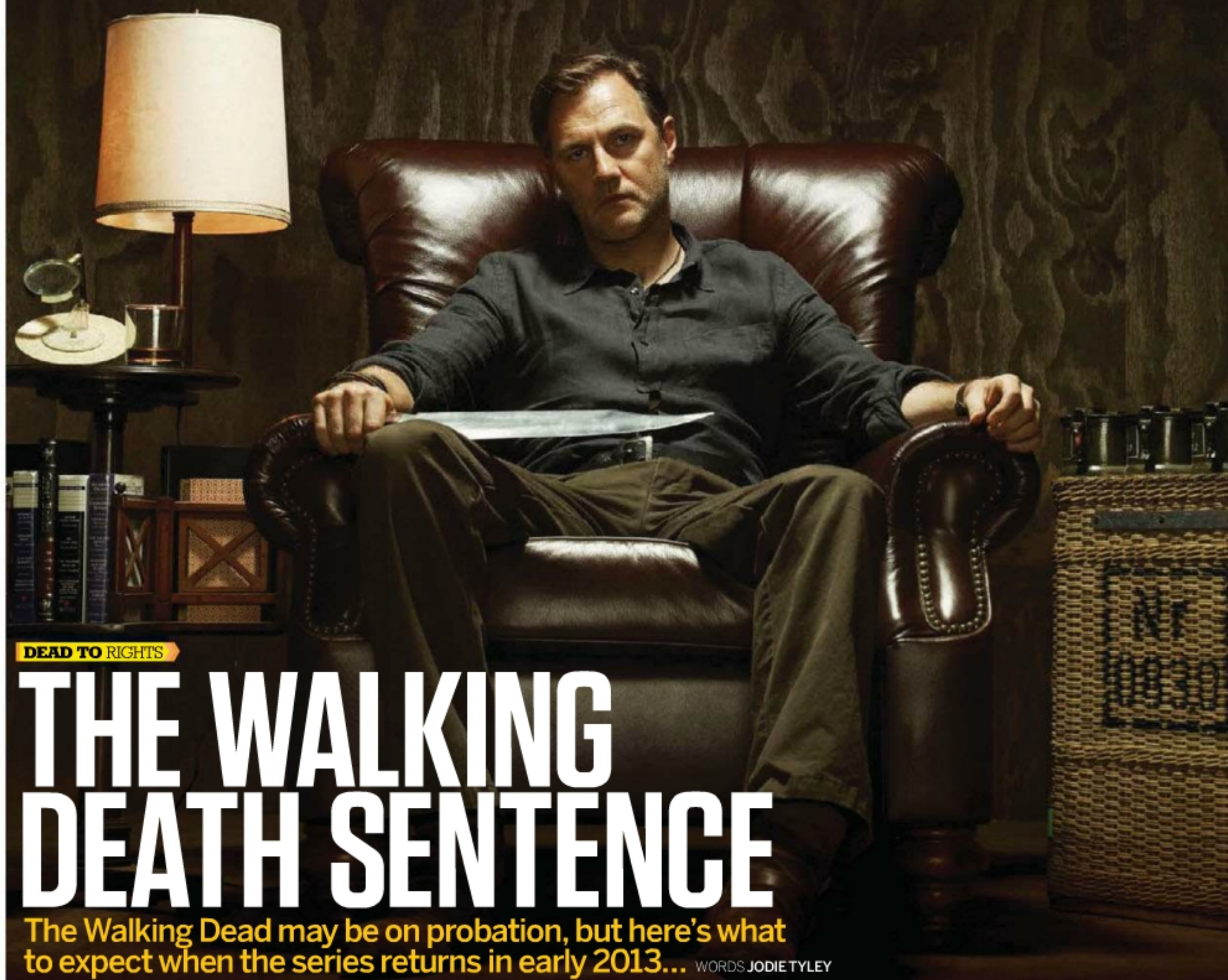
As angst-riddled teen Carolyn Stoddard in *Dark Shadows*, Moretz endured weeks of testing possible werewolf make-up for her full-moon transformation, before it was ditched in favour of digital effects. "[Director] Tim Burton and I talked about it and came up with a more feline/fox approach to it, and I ended up walking around like a freak, with green legs and green and blue dots all over my face!"

5 Telekinetic Teen

In the upcoming *Carrie* remake, she takes on the role played by Sissy Spacek in 1976. "In our film, we use telekinesis as a sense of becoming something and growing up," reveals Moretz. "It's something she can look at and say, 'This might be who I am!' It really is an extension of herself, so when she's overly happy or angry, it comes out. It takes any of the strongest emotions and multiplies them by 100." ☞

Kick-Ass 2 and *Carrie* open in 2013.

“I WAS WALKING AROUND
LIKE A FREAK, WITH
GREEN LEGS AND DOTS
ALL OVER MY FACE!”
CHLOË MORETZ



DEAD TO RIGHTS

THE WALKING DEATH SENTENCE

The Walking Dead may be on probation, but here's what to expect when the series returns in early 2013... WORDS JODIE TYLEY

MORE MICHONNE

Actress Danai Gurira nailed her performance as the shift-eyed, Samurai sword-wielding fighter, but so far we haven't uncovered much beyond her survival skills. Excitingly, viewers will get answers soon. "Her back story is something we'll unravel in time," says Gurira, who reveals she will also become an ardent protector of youngster Carl (Chandler Riggs).

"I feel like I connect to her because it's not about being soft; it's about having as much ferocity as you do heart," she continues. "When you can see good from bad so clearly, you feed good and you want to destroy the bad, and Carl is nothing but good."

She won't be taking any cheek from the teenager, though, as Riggs reports, "She burns holes through my eyes. She is such a great actress, and she knows how to bring the energy... it bounces off on to me, which is cool."

EXPECT MORE GORE!

We've seen some pretty gnarly sights so far, including a pregnant-looking Walker that devoured the Lori buffet, and a gutting that ended with Michonne getting covered in entrails. When *The Walking Dead* returns, special effects master Greg Nicotero has plenty more horrors to smear on the screen. There's a scene where he comes close to addressing the question of what would happen if a walker was cremated.

"Being a fan of the genre, I feel [that] part of my responsibility is to keep changing it up [and] doing something that we haven't seen before," he says. "Last year we had the bloated ball walker, and this year we have a couple of cool things like that, so this made complete sense. I want audiences to go, 'Oh shit, that's awesome!' so getting a chance to do some crispy critters was fun, and you just haven't seen it done before."

COULD SIMON PEGG MAKE A CAMEO IN THE FUTURE?

The *Shaun Of The Dead* actor and pioneer of a whole new sub-sub-genre (rom-zom-com) is an avid watcher of the series. In fact, he texted effects guru Nicotero after episode four, 'The Killer Within'. "The thing that made me laugh is, he wrote 'Having to shoot your mom is so 2004!' because, of course, in *Shaun Of The Dead* he had to shoot his mom when she became a walker," so they did it back in 2004."

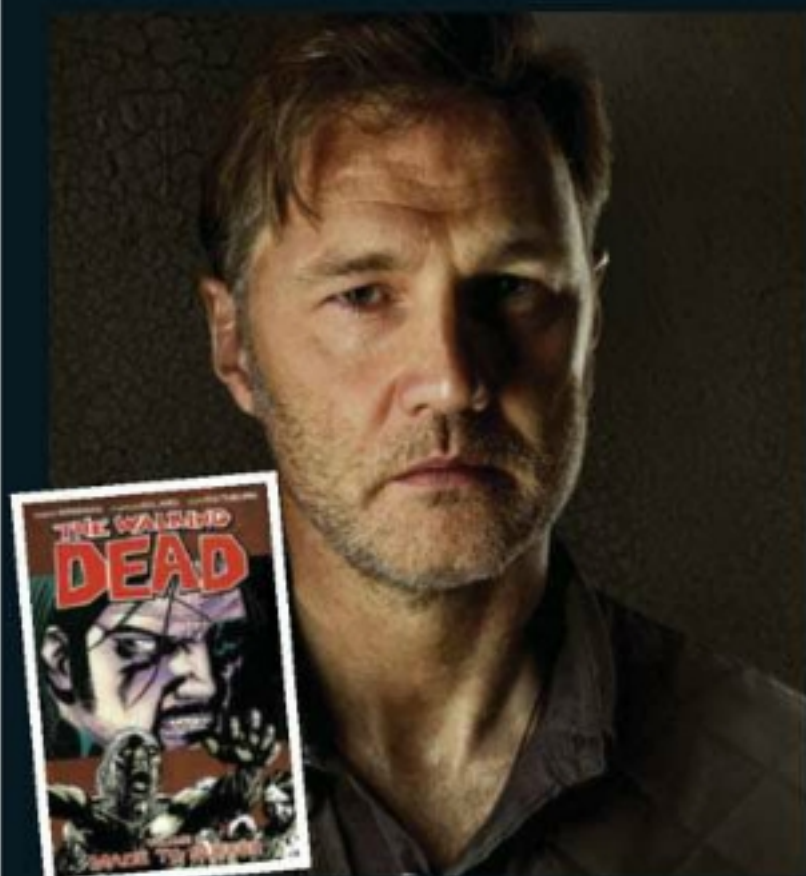
Nicotero also revealed there was talk of Pegg playing Dr Jenner in the CDC back in Season One, and they already have Andrew Lincoln and David Morrissey masquerading as Yanks. "I think it's funny that all of our leads tend to be British guys – pretty soon we'll get Nick Frost. We just keep bringing all the British guys over to be in the show."



COMICS VS TV

How it all goes down in the comic-book series...

Sci-Fi Now
POTENTIAL
SPOILER
ALERT!



Governor sinks to new lows

The big bad gets a whole lot worse when he brutally rapes and tortures Michonne. It's in retaliation for her biting off his ear as payback for cutting off Rick's hand. Actress Danai Gurira confirms the pair have a violent relationship, but is this too dark?

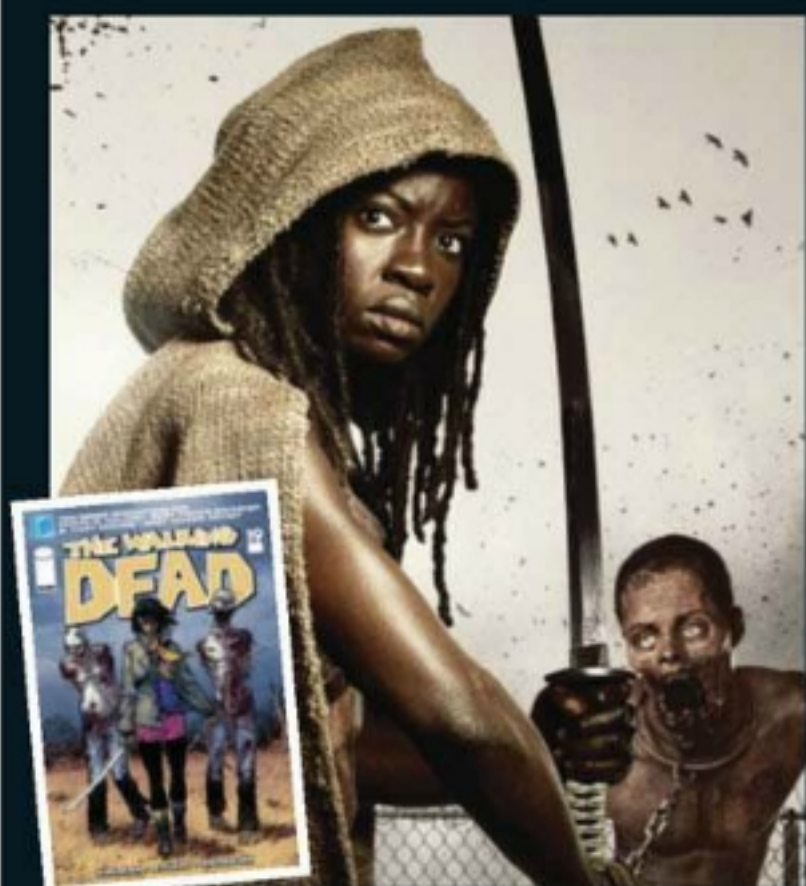
Odds it happens: 20-1



A new love triangle?

With the introduction of Tyreese (who will be played by *The Wire*'s Chad Coleman), Rick will gain a recruit and the ladies a love interest. In the comics, he catches the eyes of Carol and Michonne. Things don't work out very well for Carol, though, as she spots the pair in a clinch.

Odds it happens: 10-1



Bloody vengeance

Michonne breaks into the Governor's apartment and mutilates his genitals, drills through his arm and scoops out his eyeball before going for his zombie daughter. She currently has no reason to do this, but showrunner Glen Mazzara has hinted that these characters will have a lengthy arc.

Odds it happens: 5-1



War breaks out

The Governor leads an assault on the prison and the Atlanta survivors, delivering an ultimatum: surrender or die. He drives a tank through the prison fences, destroying their safety, which would make sense since they killed those army men and stole their armoured vehicle.

Odds it happens: 2-1

R.I.P

STOP HERE IF YOU DON'T WANT TO
KNOW WHO'S BITTEN THE DUST...

Sci-Fi Now
SPOILER
ALERT!

"It was pin drop quiet through that whole scene," says Sarah Wayne Callies, who played Lori. "We didn't close the set, so the whole crew was there. Anyone else is better suited to this than Maggie [who is forced to operate the fatal caesarean], but she is the one who's there, so Lori has to turn her into a matriarch in the space of two minutes to save her baby's life. That's a remarkable story, and obviously it will affect Maggie for the rest of the season, and likewise, Carl has to become a man, because there's no one else to put Lori down, and there's no one else to be the bearer of her final words."

"In a way, it was an intimate process, because Glen [Mazzara] lost his mother shortly before they started writing this season, so I was very aware that this was a scene that he had written about a woman saying goodbye to his son, having just said goodbye to his mother and heard many of those words. People have asked me, 'How does it feel to leave the show?' Watch the episode, and you'll know exactly how I feel, because it's all there."

Sci-Fi Now
SPOILER
ALERT!

"They say once you have that moral moment where you try to appeal to everybody's conscience and try to be the voice of reason, you get the bite or something like that," says the recently departed IronE Singleton. "Something happens to you, so it's interesting how that goes. I've thought about that; I was like, 'Oh wow, T-Dog is appealing to the group'; it kind of sounds like Dale in a more condensed, abridged fashion, and the next day you know he's getting bit."

"In the beginning, I had no idea I was going to go out so heroically, because when I was cast I was told that I would [be in] two, maybe three episodes, but I ended up staying on the show for three seasons."

"It's not my call to say that I wanted more or less; I'm just so pleased to have been a part of something so special and so historic."



Will Michonne emulate her comic-book counterpart?



STAR WARS

BATTLESTAR BEGINS

We go back in time to meet a younger, pluckier William Adama in *Battlestar Galactica: Blood & Chrome* INTERVIEW JOE NAZZARO

There's the reimagining, the prequel, and sitting somewhere between the two comes *Battlestar Galactica: Blood & Chrome*. It's fronted by former *Skins* star Luke Pasqualino, whose fresh face is a million light-years away from the man he eventually becomes, William Adama (Edward James Olmos). In this prequel of sorts, he's a cocky young pilot assigned to the newest battlestar in the Colonial fleet: the pre-battle-bashed *Galactica*.

Its journey to the screen is an unusual one, airing on YouTube channel Machinima Prime, then on the Syfy channel before coming out on DVD within months, but *BSG* veteran and current producer David Eick says he never intended it as a traditional pilot. "It was always developed as a project for an online environment," he tells us. "Kind of like the *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*-style, adapted to the Thirties-style movie serials



Despite not being the hoped-for full series, fans will rejoice at returning to the *BSG* universe.



The original commanding officer of the battlestar *Galactica*, William Adama, played by Edward James Olmos.

where you have ten minutes of story and a cliffhanger, followed by ten minutes of story and the cliffhanger. Then, after ten episodes it would resolve itself in a pre-act structure as a whole movie. So when I set out to develop this, my thinking was to design a mission."

The "So Say We All" speech that Olmos famously ad-libbed in the original series helped to define the character, but Pasqualino's portrayal will allow us to understand the trigger behind his hatred of the robotic race of Cylons "He wants to incinerate them, but why? And the more I thought about it, the more I finally came up with the answer that his hatred came from a very personal place," says Eick. "Through that experience, [he] came to feel that the Cylons were [an] unforgivable race of creatures that, of course being responsible for our genocide, needed to be gotten rid of."

Where most sci-fi TV shows are forced to keep outer-space exploration to a minimum due to budget restrictions, *Caprica* included, the makers of *Blood & Chrome* decided on a different tack. "We wanted to make it fresh and accessible, but not duplicative of the last *BSG*, so we made this a green-screen composite universe," explains Eick. The environments were painstakingly crafted by the same visual effects team that worked on *BSG*. "We've been able to create something that feels completely different from what people may have seen three and four years ago, but that nevertheless retains a certain echo of what we had done so the fans still feel like they're immersed in that same universe."

Original series creator Ronald D Moore was reportedly tied up with other projects, and therefore couldn't be involved, but Eick insists the series still bares his influence. "We were always kind of existing in the same mindset," he says. "*Battlestar* was a child we gave birth to together, and this new grandchild of it naturally has his genetic imprint on it. I wouldn't ever claim otherwise."

Despite the pair's previous endeavour, *Caprica*, being cancelled after 19 episodes, there's hope that *Blood & Chrome* will continue beyond the DVD release. "There was absolutely the kind of very organic evolution where we leave the characters at the end of this story and what we would pursue as our next tale – and I'm very hopeful and optimistic that we'll be doing that soon." ☞

Battlestar Galactica: Blood & Chrome will air in its entirety on Syfy in early 2013, and is being serialised on youtube.com/machinimaprime.

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FAIRY TALE ROMANCE

LOVE'S A HEXENBIEST

Grimm's Bitsie Tulloch and Sasha Roiz on their spellbound passion

The mid-season finale of *Grimm* ended with the apt line: "To be continued... sorry". Everything was falling into place; Adalind the deliciously evil Hexenbiest is back, Juliette is busted snogging Captain Renard and Nick has moved in with Monroe at last.

When the series returns next year, we will find out how the love triangle will pan out. Actress Bitsie Tulloch (Juliette) teases what's to come: "I was shooting a scene last night, I'm not going to say with whom, that was so complicated a love scene that it required a stunt coordinator and took eight hours to shoot. And this is what



The latter half of the season will be more lively for Juliette.



happens when you do your own stunts..." she says, revealing a nasty bruise on her arm. "This is from the love scene. I can't say [what happens], but it is worst around my legs. There is a lot going on. You haven't seen anything like it in the show so far."

Odds are this clinch was instigated by Renard, who has been attracted to Juliette since he woke her from her coma. He's a more intense suitor than Nick, but we're not quite sure whose side he's really on. Actor Sasha Roiz is enjoying the debate, "It's fun being the antagonist, and it's fun having a lot of secrets," he says. "But a lot of stuff gets revealed this season, and a lot of dynamics change very quickly. So we'll see where it all leads, but I never thought of him as the bad guy. I just thought of him as somebody with a purpose."

Grimm returns in February 2013 on Watch.

MERLIN CASTS ITS FINAL SPELL

The cast say farewell to the much-loved show



Katie McGrath
Morgana

1 "I have always said the success of the show has stemmed from our audience being able to relate to the characters on different levels – being based on the universally loved Arthurian legend is only a tiny part of its success. It's a story about acceptance and growing up. The breathtaking finale of this series leaves you with no doubt that characters have been on their journeys and had their stories told – it's completely the right time to draw our telling of the story to a close."

Angel Coulby
Gwen

2 "It has been a very special and memorable five years making *Merlin*. I feel extremely proud to

have been part of such a brilliant show and such a great team. I think we've told the story we set out to tell. I believe the key to any successful show is making sure you leave people wanting more!"

Richard Wilson
Gaius

3 "Firstly, I would like to say that I'm extremely sad that *Merlin* has come to an end. Speaking as Gaius, I feel I have mentored the young wizard as far as I can – he is much smarter and greater than me now, and I am simply exhausted!"

Bradley James
Arthur

4 "The *Merlin* years have provided me with fond memories, great experiences and beloved friends, and all the while we were supported by a

devoted fan base that made the show a unique, surreal and special experience. My words won't do justice to the honour of being King Arthur, so I shall just say that it has been an exceptional one and that knowing the show has been a part of so many people's lives has been humbling."

Colin Morgan
Merlin

5 "This was always going to be a five-year journey that we embarked on, and I think the show has run its natural course. The show has grown and grown each year, and now we've arrived at its strongest point, and we've achieved what we set out to do... I know this is the end, and I know this is goodbye, but thank you for being there on the journey with us, because it has been a lot of fun!"



FRESH MEAT

NEW BLOOD

WORDS JODIE TYLEY

Who's who guide to the newcomers in True Blood

Season Six may be the first for *True Blood* without series creator and showrunner Alan Ball, and be two episodes shorter due to Anna Paquin's pregnancy, but it's no less packed than usual for HBO's supernatural sensation. Here's your at-a-glance guide to who's moving in, what it might mean for the regulars and how much this injection of new blood will spice up the show...

BEN (Rob Kazinsky)

Eastenders ex-pat Kazinsky is playing Ben, a charismatic faerie who strikes up a – probably naked – bond with Sookie and helps the Stackhouse siblings uncover the mystery of their parents' murder. Despite his charm, he is described as "dark, unpredictable and extremely dangerous." After three years running up the apples and pears to pick up the dog and bone (sorry), Kazinsky is set to break out in 2013, appearing in not just *True Blood*, but Guillermo del Toro's *Pacific Rim*, too, having been forced to pull out of *The Hobbit* trilogy.

New Blood Rating 

MACKLYN (Rutger Hauer)

No stranger to neck-chomping cadavers, *Blade Runner* star Rutger Hauer actually had a hand in kicking off this small screen sub-genre, playing vampire Lothos in *Buffy: The Vampire Slayer*. He's also dabbled in the classics – albeit somewhat ignominiously – as Dracula in Wes Craven's *Dracula III: Legacy*, Abraham Van Helsing in Dario Argento's *Dracula 3D* and Kurt Barlow in 2004's *Salem's Lot*. Hauer will play Macklyn, an ominous figure linked to Sookie and Jason (Ryan Kwanten), and it's tempting to assume he's connected to their parents' deaths.

New Blood Rating 

NICOLE JANSSEN (TBC)

Incoming showrunner Mark Hudis has put out the call for a new character. Nicole Janssen is described as a white, 20-something "do-gooder to the core" whose hippy idealism is "ultimately vaguely idiotic and dangerous. A true bleeding heart, not at all concerned with money; she's concerned with the common good and doing what's right... Life hasn't beaten her down yet." Basically, she sounds like an even more profoundly dull character than Sookie was at the start of show. Just Bill's type, then.

New Blood Rating 



THE REST IN PIECES

Four other nuggets to ponder ahead of Season Six

WOLF STYLE

Shirtless werewolf Alcide (Joe Manganiello) and Sookie could still get it on, with departing showrunner Alan Ball saying that the "door isn't closed" for the couple following their sofa-based sexcapade in early Season Five.

THE STACKHOUSE ON THE LEFT

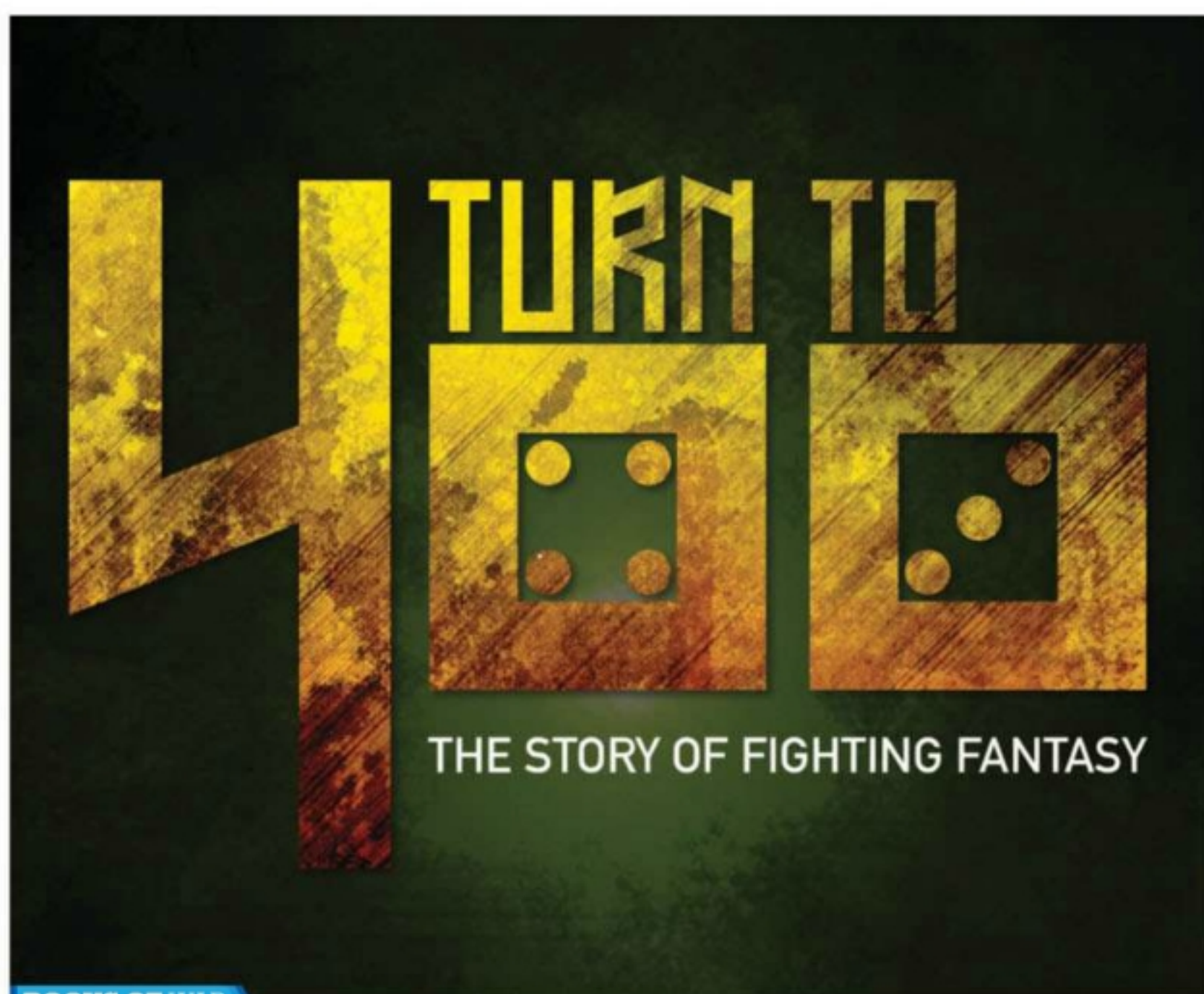
Jason (Ryan Kwanten) is haunted by the death of his parents to an obsessive degree, which is set to dominate the season. "It really begins to shift the very fibre of who he is and everything that he thought he was," Kwanten told *The Hollywood Reporter*.

STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON

He may have gotten so wrapped up in Lilith (Jessica Clark)'s poisonous vampire gospel that he's prepared to kill for it, but Bill (Stephen Moyer) isn't beyond redemption. "He's been lost and he's found something to grab hold of that he thinks is the right way forward," Moyer told *TVLine*.

HOYT COULD BE BACK

Although Hoyt (Jim Parrack) left Season Five with a certain amount of finality – heading for Alaska and unable to remember his childhood friend, Jason – the actor has revealed that the option is there for the loveable everyman to return. "I know that Alan Ball told me that they didn't want to kill him," he told *TV Guide*.



BOOKS OF WAR

HIGHLIGHTING FANTASY

YOU can be the hero in this new Fighting Fantasy documentary

The Fighting Fantasy gamebook series not only popularised sword and sorcery (among other genre tropes) in the UK in a way scarcely equalled until Peter Jackson's *Lord Of The Rings* trilogy, but it's tied into the birth of Games Workshop, the breakout of *Dungeons & Dragons* and the rise of all forms of interactive storytelling. It's a suitably epic saga that director/producer Sean Riley wants to tell to the highest possible standard with a TV-quality documentary...

Where did the idea for *Turn To 400* come from?

My current job is to come up with factual programme ideas to develop and pitch to TV stations, so I'm always on the lookout for stories that might make a documentary. TV stations like reasons for a

documentary, like anniversaries, etc (you can see where this is going). Anyway, Games Workshop is around the corner from my office – it sparked a conversation in the pub and a few hours reminiscing about cheating playing Fighting Fantasy books under the duvet. Before you know it, I'm emailing Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson's publishers with the idea for the documentary.

Why do you think this is a story that needs to be told?

I have a great deal of nostalgia for the Fighting Fantasy books, and once I'd discovered more about the story behind them (the lengths Steve and Ian went to get GW off the ground are incredible!), I thought that their determination to follow their dreams would be a great example to everyone. Plus, there were 16 million copies



of the books sold worldwide, so I expected there to be an audience for the film!

What has your own relationship with Fighting Fantasy been like?

I was about eight when *Warlock Of Firetop Mountain* hit the shelves, so my first book was actually *Forest Of Doom*. I was blown away and the books became a collecting obsession... until sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll took over (well, rock 'n' roll, anyway – there was precious little sex and drugs in the little seaside retirement town I grew up in!). I've now got two boys, and think they'll love the books when they're old enough. However, when I went searching for my collection, it appeared to have disappeared. When I got my new copy of *Blood Of The Zombies*, I opened it to do a bit of research and was glued for a weekend.

Do you have any more geeky projects lined up after *TT400*?

Not at present – there's still the day job of trying to get factual TV ideas commissioned, and as part of that we've discussed Ian's involvement in Next-Gen, but TV's a tricky business, and people are constantly paranoid about having their ideas stolen! I'm always open to people's ideas, though! ☺

Find out more about *Turn To 400* at www.turnto400.com.

STORE TREK Some places are worth leaving the house for

"I love The Who Shop in East Ham, because it's near me... and is full of *Doctor Who* stuff!"
Naomi Wong, London

The Who Shop
49-41 Barking Road
Upton Park
London, E6 1PY
www.thewhoshop.com



Tell us about your favourite sci-fi store, comic shop, or anime retailer on Twitter // Facebook // Google+

PARTY OF THE GALAXY

UK'S FIRST KLINGON WEDDING

This couple boldly went where no couple has gone before...

Life-long Trekkie Sonnie Fustavsson, 29, and convert Jossie Sockertopp, 23, travelled all the way from Sweden to London's ExCel centre to get hitched in the first wedding of its kind.

The pair wore traditional Klingon attire with prosthetic foreheads at the 'Destination Star Trek' event, inspired by an episode of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* where Klingon Worf ties the knot with science officer Jadzia Dax. They exchanged vows and swore to unite against all opponents before cutting the Borg cube cake.

Cake designer Charlotte White talked us through this unusual mission...

What was the big day like?

I was lucky enough to attend the Klingon ceremony. It was really quite romantic! The service was read in both Klingon and English so that we could understand what was being said. The words were all about two hearts finding each other... I'm a big softy really! I had heard that Klingon couples normally duel with swords during the ceremony, but I was grateful that this was left out, as I was a bit worried that the cake might get knocked over!

What was the couple's reaction to the cake?

They were thrilled - I think it exceeded their expectations! When they had mentioned a Borg Cube, I think they



imagined that they would get that one cube cake. What they didn't expect was my flair for the dramatic! The bride really enjoyed her slice of cake.

What next, a Comic-Con wedding?

I am looking forward to the next couple who will challenge my cake decorating skills in this way! I have a reputation as a vintage-loving girl, but what few people know is that I have a film degree and wrote my dissertation on superhero movies, so a Comic-Con wedding would be my idea of heaven! I always thought that Selena Kyle should have married Bruce Wayne. Batman wedding, anyone? ☺

See more of Charlotte White's cake-making skills at www.restorationcake.co.uk.



Charlotte did an excellent job on the Borg cake.

PORTING ONLINE

5 THINGS... From SciFiNow.co.uk



1 IRON MAN 3 "ISN'T A SERIOUS MOVIE", SAYS KEVIN FEIGE tinyurl.com/IM3-movie



2 TWILIGHT VOLTURI JOINS THE VAMPIRE DIARIES tinyurl.com/Twilight-TVD



5 KATEE SACKHOFF ON RIDDICK 2 tinyurl.com/blood-nudity

twitterwatch

Which solo Avengers movie are you most looking forward to?



@WesWyndamPryce
Captain America: Winter Soldier, a bit darker and an AMAZING story arc in the comic!



@DanDoolan
Ant Man for me, Edgar Wright was born to make that movie.



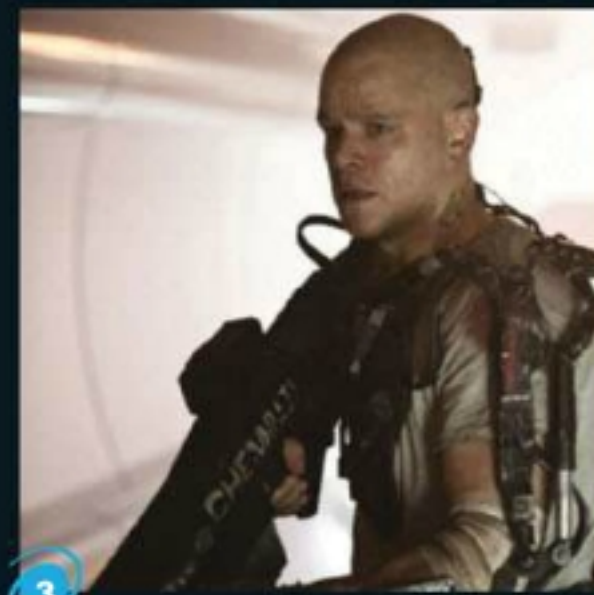
@OGGames
Don't do anymore solos, apart from Iron Man they have all been terrible until now. Just do Avengers 2 & 3 :)



@stevenmorrish
Going by the trailer, Iron Man 3 looks like it's going to be massive.



@mavieenlair
Not solo, but I'd like to see Guardians Of The Galaxy and how Marvel can pull that one off.



3 NEILL BLOMKAMP'S ELYSIUM tinyurl.com/elysium-damon



4 CHRIS HEMSWORTH TALKS THOR AND JANE tinyurl.com/jane-thor



MUST-SEE TV
Arrow

"THERE'S DEFINITELY A
HUNGER FOR SUPERHERO
SHOWS ON TELEVISION"

MARC GUGGENHEIM



TV'S DARK KNIGHT RISES

WORDS JODIE TYLEY INTERVIEWS SAMUEL ROBERTS, JOE NAZZARO

THE MAKERS OF ARROW HAVE FINALLY FOUND THE FORMULA FOR SMALL-SCREEN SUPERHERO SUCCESS, EARNING A FULL SERIES AND STRONG RATINGS. WE CHAT TO THE CAST AND CREATORS ABOUT WHERE THEY GO FROM HERE...

Green Arrow is the street level superhero who doesn't belong in big clubs like the Justice League; he's fighting for the little guy. The TV adaptation has stayed true to DC's last remaining hippy and abides by the cardinal rule: no superpowers. The showrunners aren't afraid of its origin, though, and so far the series has seen appearances from Deadshot (Michael

Rowe), Deathstroke (Jeffrey Robinson), The Huntress (Jessica De Gouw) and China White (Kelly Hu), but they're merely assassins who dabble in cosplay. It's for this reason that *Arrow* has snared as many viewers as the Emerald Archer has enemies, bagging a full-season run.

We chatted with executive producers Marc Guggenheim and Andrew Kreisberg, who revealed that there will be more characters orbiting the DC Universe,

waiting to crash-land when the series returns in 2013. The latest in the rogues' gallery is Count Vertigo (Seth Gabel). They've changed his name to suit his new role as a drug peddler, 'Vertigo' instead being the name of the substance taking Starling City by storm. Chances are he will go straight to the top of *Arrow*'s naughty list, particularly as his sister, Thea (Willa Holland) has become a pill-popping party girl while Oliver's been away. ➤



MUST-SEE TV

Arrow



THE EMERALD ARCHER

Stephen Amell on becoming the saviour of Starling City

What kind of physical training are you doing for this show?

I like to get a little bit of a lead-up for shirtless scenes; I like for them to let me know a little bit. I showed up in LA two Saturdays ago, and my buddies had done a congratulations cake for me, and they had done my head, but made Arrow super-fat on the cake. I train when I can and I do everything I normally would do, but I wear a super-heavy weight vest.

What research did you do, and how do you feel about the *Smallville* take on Green Arrow?

I had never seen *Smallville*, so I didn't know, and I wasn't worried about comparisons because this show is so different. I didn't know anything about the Green Arrow character prior to auditioning for the role. I thought the pilot was very all-encompassing, and I trusted the people that were involved in the project.

After we shot the pilot, I educated myself

and read a bunch, but we're not leaning on the comics and then filling in the story and the characters; we're dealing with the characters and building out from that. If you don't care about what Oliver is going through, the fight scenes and the action sequences aren't going to mean anything.

How do you get in the mindset of someone who's a little unhinged?

I use how tired I am with the schedule – it's actually really helpful. He's come back to Starling City with just one idea and one mission, and he's trying to go from point A to B. But what he didn't consider when he was on the island was how it was going to affect his relationship with his sister and his mother, and how he was going to go about this and not have people suspect he's up to something, so he becomes a little bit unhinged. He becomes angry, and that's fun for me, and there's romance, of course.

Didn't you recently say you had no life; you had a TV series? Is it hard to deal with?

No, because I'm living the dream right now. At a certain point things will slow down and I'll have ten days where I will not get out of bed, but that is not today. When I screen tested for this, I walked into Peter Roth's office – he's the president of Warner Bros Television – and he knew that I was Canadian, so he said, [adopts comical Canadian accent] "Ey, so what's going on oot there?" and I said, "Mr Roth, I'm not Canadian today." And there will be a moment when I'm tired, but it is not now.

What kind of pressure are you under to live up to the comics?

When the show debuted, I definitely sat in my trailer in silence, looking at Twitter and wondering if people watched it, because all of a sudden it was out there in the world, so there were all of these anticipatory, adrenaline-laced feelings, but no pressure.

➤ "Count Vertigo, I would say after Merlyn, is probably his most well known villain," says Kreisberg. "When your last name is Vertigo, of course you're going to grow up to be a supervillain who uses vertigo as a weapon. Seth Gabel is terrifyingly awesome in the part. First of all, how he gets the nickname 'the Count' is kind of fun and spooky, but also how he is able to create this vertigo effect without using certain superpowered means – and that's what's fun for us. There are some characters who for the most part have transitioned literally from the comics – like Deadshot, who despite his costume is still the world's greatest assassin – and Deathstroke and China White, but Count Vertigo is our first real, complete overhaul. We're really excited about it."

AS ALWAYS, THE AIM IS TO ROOT THESE CHARACTERS IN THE WORLD WE RECOGNISE. "SIMILARLY WITH CHRISTOPHER NOLAN IN THE BATMAN

films, he took a lot of fantastical characters and really tried to ground them in reality," Kreisberg continues. "That's what we've been trying to do – we haven't gone into the DC Comics playbook, grabbed a character and said, 'We should do an episode about this person'. We've been designing our stories to tell the best stories we can, then we look at the DC Comics playbook and say, 'Is there something we can put through the prism of *Arrow*?'"

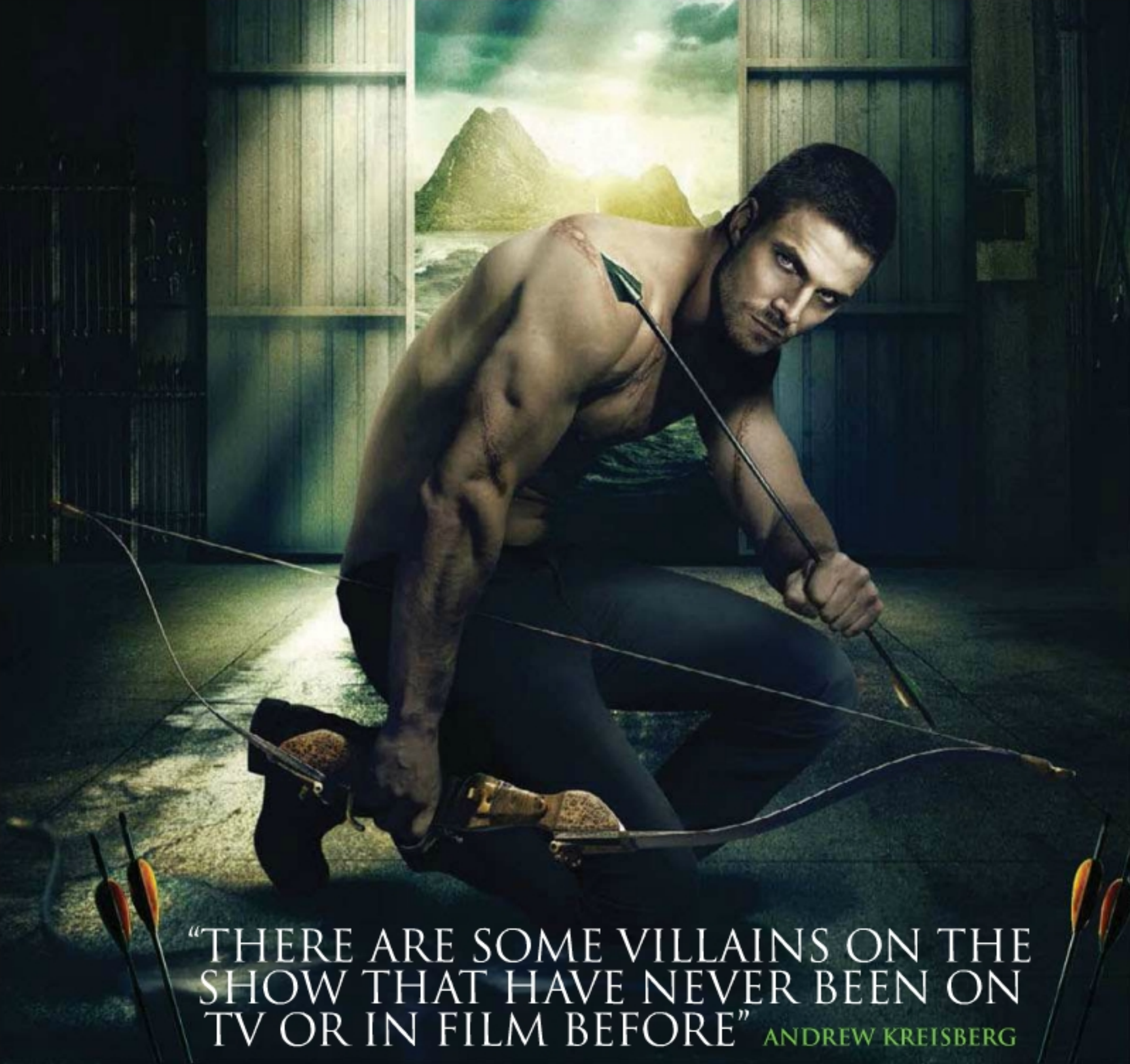
It's fitting that *Arrow*'s showrunners look to the Caped Crusader for inspiration, since that was the original motivation for Green Arrow in the comics. Introduced in 1941, billionaire Oliver Queen was almost a mirror image of Bruce Wayne in the hope that his huge popularity would also rub off

on the Emerald Archer. Aside from using their healthy bank accounts to fund their after-dark activities, they both had a young sidekick in tow, a clown-like arch-enemy and a platoon of vehicles named after their alias ("Quickly, to the Arrow-Plane!"). The two joined forces in the Justice League, but it's unlikely that Batman will feature in this retelling; there's only room for one superhero in the city. There's no shortage of fanboy references, though, as Guggenheim says, "The DC Universe is sprinkled throughout the series. Fans of DC will catch references to other locations and concepts, and you'll definitely feel like you're seeing the non-powered corners of the DC Universe."

The sources that *Arrow* is drawing from are Andy Diggle and Jock's *Green Arrow: Year One*, which rewrote the origin into the shipwrecked tale we're familiar with, and Mike Grell's *The Longbow Hunters*, which made the bold move of isolating the hero from other iconic DC characters. Grell took away Black Canary's sonic scream, and when Oliver Queen's long-time pal Hal Jordan (Green Lantern) visited, it was strictly in civilian clothes. The *Arrow* writers have paid homage to these touchstones by recruiting Grell to draw the police sketch Oliver is shown in the pilot episode; his bodyguard is named after Diggle, and Dinah 'Laurel' Lance works for CNRI, which sounds tantalisingly close to 'canary'. It's something the writers enjoy weaving into the show, reveals Kreisberg. "One of the fun things for us with this project is that Marc and I are both comic-book fans and comic writers. There are so many great, wonderful characters in the DC Universe who have never gotten their fair shake in TV or film, so it's fun for us to



Green Arrow's long origin story provides ample storytelling material for the series.



"THERE ARE SOME VILLAINS ON THE SHOW THAT HAVE NEVER BEEN ON TV OR IN FILM BEFORE" **ANDREW KREISBERG**

go through the catalogue and find these quirky, interesting people and pepper them throughout the series. They make us happy, so we hope fans will feel the same."

These winks are the only thing in the show that's being treated with a bit of jest, since the leading man is not only a hero, but also a cold-blooded killer. We've seen him fire his lab-made weapons into wrongdoers' skulls episode after episode, and there are no plans of letting up. "We're heavily invested in keeping up the same level of action throughout the series, because that is one of the signature aspects of the show," he adds. "It's what makes it different from every superhero show you've seen before." Viewers are going to see Oliver grappling with his moral compass, though, something that began with the introduction of Helena Bertinelli, aka the Huntress. She is essentially the funhouse mirror version of Oliver Queen, inadvertently forcing him to confront all sorts of philosophical questions about justice, vengeance and whether he has a thing for girls in leather.

Morality issues will be an ongoing theme, as Kreisberg confirms, "Because of Oliver's actions – as we'll see throughout the series – there will be other people who will desire to join or

emulate him, and we'll get to see where Oliver draws the line, because he does draw lines. Part of what's interesting about the first year is we're seeing this hero at his nascent stage, and his morality will be evolving. The island taught him a certain way of looking at life that he's brought back with him and affects the interactions with his family, friends and confidants – even his enemies. His world view will be slowly evolving."

'Slow' is the key word, as the creators have drip-fed flashbacks to the island since the pilot, and the show's writers are playing the long game. "One of the things about Green Arrow is that his origin is basically a five-year origin story," says Guggenheim. "Superman doesn't have that and Spider-Man doesn't have that. So we'll be continuing that hybrid of present day riveting narrative, intercut with these informative flashbacks. We'll discover why Edward Fyers [Deathstroke's employer] is on the island and how Yao Fei [Oliver Queen's island-dwelling predecessor] plays into it, and Oliver's real journey from being the callow youth that we met in the pilot to being someone who can survive. After this year we'll have no doubt that Oliver can survive for four more years – he'll have to survive on the island."

The writers have been careful to include enough revelations along the way to keep viewers interested – a lesson Guggenheim learned from working on *FlashForward*. "I learned – I think the hard way – that the audience these days is looking for answers and for plot to move a lot faster than earlier shows," he says of the show's premature cancellation. "I like to say that other shows with heavier mythology have worn out their welcome, so our goal has been 'Let's give answers quickly and present new questions afterwards'. We're moving through so much story that we never take our foot off the gas."

Superheroes live and die by the actors who play them, and a casting misfire can lead to (outerwear) pants around the ankles. Take Nicolas Cage and his hairpiece as Ghost Rider or Alicia Silverstone as a pouting Batgirl, for example. Casting Stephen Amell as Oliver Queen could have been a risk; his previous roles including a bit-part as a werewolf in *The Vampire Diaries* and a busboy-turned-prostitute in *Hung*. However, he's proven that he's got the quiet, brooding intensity of a castaway-come-antihero who can turn on the debauched playboy charm when the script calls for a party (every other episode). ➤

ARROW
TV's Dark Knight Rises



SPEEDY COME, SPEEDY GO

Willa Holland on the not-so-annoying little sister

This is very different from the other shows you've done like *The OC* and *Gossip Girl*. Was there a big adjustment?

Yeah, this character is a lot more layered than anything else. People have been asking me, "You're playing this little sister again, how is that?" But to me, Thea is a completely different person; she comes from a similar wealth realm, but what she's gone through is so very drastically different from Caitlin [her character in *The OC*]. Yes, she's using drugs, but I think she has different reasons. I honestly don't think she's an addict. I feel like in the last five years she's had nobody to talk to, no way to express herself and honestly needed to suppress everything that was going on in her mind, and had no idea how to do it other than drug use.

Your character's nickname is a callback to the comic-book. Do you look to that character for any inspiration?

I did actually, not that I'm allowed to do anything about it or say anything about it, because I'm still completely in the dark. I have no idea what's going to happen, or even if it will. There are a lot of hints towards it, so fingers crossed, because I would love to pick up a bow and arrow and start kicking some ass. I would love to put on the red and yellow.

Did you have a favourite comic when you were a kid?

I didn't read too many comics, I'm not going to lie about that, but every single day when I got home from school, who didn't watch *Justice League*? It's like the first thing that's on the TV; you've gotta do it, so of course I knew of Green Arrow.



MUST-SEE TV

Arrow



BLACK CANARY'S CRY

Katie Cassidy on the superhero-in-waiting

Can you relate to the way Laurel feels about Oliver?

I have two sisters, and there's no way – for me – that I could ever come back from that and forgive someone. Having said that, she is obviously willing to face him. It's like a love addiction; she loves him, but she knows she's always going to get hurt. I feel that's the only way to explain it, because I often wonder myself, "Why is she still talking to this person?"

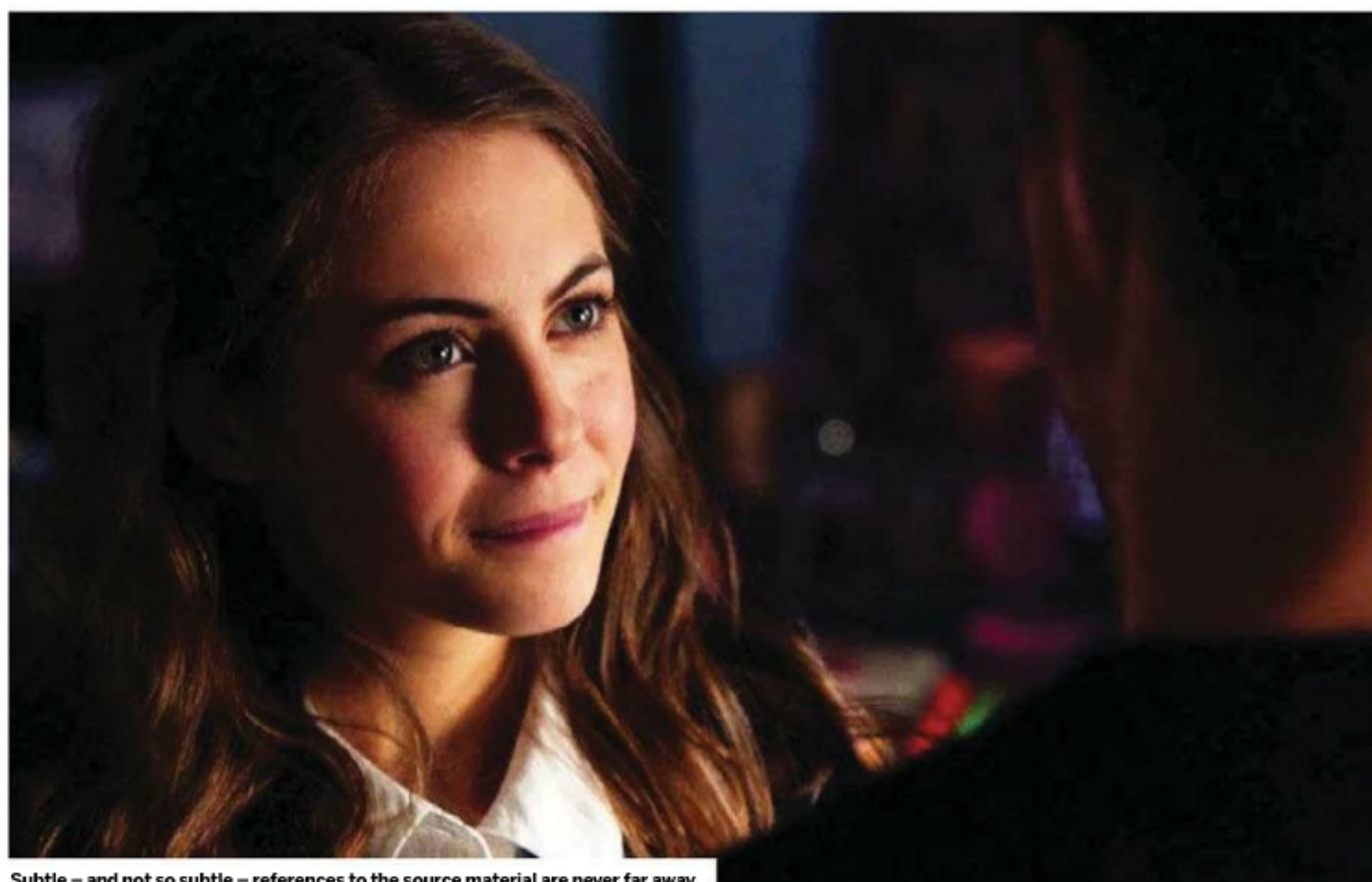
It's interesting that she's chosen the profession that she's chosen, but I think that comes more from family than anything else. Her father is a cop, and I think he's instilled in her drive and a lot of values, and she expects everybody else to live up to that. I think she's seen the potential in Oliver, so she knows it's there; it's just a matter of him living up to who she thinks he is.

When you were preparing for the role, did you look at the comics at all?

They didn't necessarily ask me to. I went in and had a meeting, and heard what they had to say about what they thought of the character and where they saw the character going, and that was very much everything I wanted and was invested in. It made me excited and certainly inspired me. I had done research and read about the comic-book series and who Laurel and her alter-ego was, but I wasn't necessarily basing the character on that.

Will we see Black Canary?

Um... I feel that's a question that you should ask Marc [Guggenheim] and let me know what he says!



Subtle – and not so subtle – references to the source material are never far away.

WHEN AUDITIONING FOR THE LEAD ROLE, GUGGENHEIM SAYS THEY WEREN'T LOOKING FOR HOW MANY CHIN-UPS THE GUY COULD DO, THOUGH NO ONE

would doubt Amell's abs. "It was all about charisma," he says. "When you're casting for a television show, it's different to casting a movie. You've got to cast someone who people will literally invite into their living rooms and bedrooms every week. Even though we feel like Stephen is a future movie star, we feel he has that accessibility and watchability that you look for in casting a television star."

Arrow is a diversion from the kind of superheroics Guggenheim is used to, having written the screenplay for *Green Lantern*, but he thinks this is why he works on television. "He doesn't have magical powers; he's the hero all of us could be. There's that wish fulfilment aspect, that quality of 'If I went through what this guy went through, I could end up with his powers.'" The show has struck a chord from the offset, attracting the CW network's biggest audience of any show in three years. Kreisberg thinks the reason for its pull is the entire ensemble; not just Oliver. "One of the things that makes him perfect for television is that, unlike a lot of superheroes, Oliver has a lot of people in his life," he says. "Most superheroes tend to be loners, but Oliver has got a mother, a stepfather, a sister and a best friend, and the love of his life is still around. What's interesting about him is that he's sort of alone in a crowd."

"He has this dark secret, but it's really hard to keep it hidden because there are so many people in his life. It's not as easy as Batman alone in his mansion with only Alfred who knows everything." Like many other cornerstones of Batman's life, *Arrow* has his own version of Alfred in bodyguard John Diggle (David Ramsey). But unlike Alf, he makes a blunt distinction between waging a war and being a murderer. Even love interest Laurel differs from Lois Lane and Gwen Stacy by considering the fact that this enigmatic crusader is a killer. She's equally unimpressed with his public persona, and understandably so; this is the guy who delivered the one-two punch of hooking up with her sister and inviting her on the boat trip that ended her life.

Arrow is a million fictional worlds away from *Smallville* with its saturated visuals and clean, ironed shirts. Even though they lived by a 'no flights, no tights' rule, the makers struggled to make Supes relevant. It even featured a version of Green Arrow (Justin Hartley), a shades-wearing boyband member that demanded a whole new level of disbelief to buy the fact that he survived being stranded on an island. Instead, the creators of *Arrow* looked to Ethan Hunt in *Mission: Impossible* for their new spin, and just as Christian Bale is the flipside of Adam West, one doesn't obliterate the other. But this new version of Oliver Queen definitely could, given the chance; he's more sinister and in need of some serious counselling.

"You're able to lock on to how difficult it must have been for Oliver Queen to

spend those five years in isolation, and the damage that did to his psyche and to make his actions as a vigilante not something everybody would be celebrating," says Kreisberg. "Normally when there's a superhero movie or TV show, everybody is 'rah-rah' behind someone putting on a mask and a cape and fighting crime. In the real world the police would be after this person, people would be sceptical, and I think all of those things make the world feel more grounded, real and lived in, and really makes you get behind Oliver and his crusade in a much more emotional way."

This seems to be where previous superpowered shows went wrong; the likes of *The Cape* and *No Ordinary Family* were swiftly axed. It was certainly the motivation behind *Arrow*, as Guggenheim admits his affinity with this formula stems from the same frustration viewers feel. "In many ways it's like we had to do this show because no one else seemed to be doing it, and there's definitely – with the success of *The Dark Knight* and all the superhero films – a hunger for that on television," he says. "Now we've been doing it for a few episodes, we understand the challenges involved, but we have an amazing crew in addition to an amazing cast. We're doing a little movie for television every week – that's the goal." With a *SHIELD* TV show on the cards, it gives us more faith than ever that a masked saviour – or several – can make this formula work for television.

Arrow will return to Sky 1 HD in 2013.



"YOU'VE GOT TO CAST
SOMEONE WHO PEOPLE
WILL INVITE INTO
THEIR BEDROOMS
EVERY WEEK"

MARC GUGGENHEIM

ARROW

TV's Dark Knight Rises



HIT OR MISS?

What we said about Arrow's all-important first six episodes on SciFiNow.co.uk

Pilot 1.01

A tightly packed drama that promises future payoff as soon as each dynamic is established, and amazingly choreographed action sequences of gunfire, martial arts and bow-fu. Over the first 60 minutes of its existence, *Arrow* establishes itself as the most thrilling, narratively rich and downright impressive genre TV debut of 2012.

VERDICT ★★★★★



Honor Thy Father 1.02

Only in time will we find out whether 'Honor Thy Father' was the second, more confident step on level ground before the climb or early evidence of the show running out of steam. Regardless, it's a fantastic piece of entertainment that deserves far better considering the ghastly *Birds Of Prey* kicked off with around 3 million more viewers.

VERDICT ★★★★★



Lone Gunmen 1.03

Starting strongly, 'Lone Gunmen' fast-tracks you so breathlessly to its resolution that it feels like a two-part episode cut short. There's a perfunctory bit of moral hand-wringing that is only slightly more complex than Deadshot going "We're the same" and Oliver replying, "No we're not! SHUT UP!" It's definitely no way to treat a much-loved character.

VERDICT ★★★★★



An Innocent Man 1.04

There's no shortage of jaw-dropping reveals as Walter discovers that Oliver's mother has been keeping some WTF?-scale rosey CGI in a warehouse, and she finally meets John Barrowman's 'Well Dressed Man'. Then the single biggest development in the show since the pilot comes crashing through the door of Queen Manor and flips the status quo...

VERDICT ★★★★★



Damaged 1.05

If there's one thing *Arrow* is getting sharp at, it's in reflecting the themes of the episode by chronologically continuing the tale of what happened to Oliver on that island. This time, we're treated to an appearance of a much anticipated comic-book villain, but 'Damaged' is more about advancing the characters, and is another high point as a result.

VERDICT ★★★★★



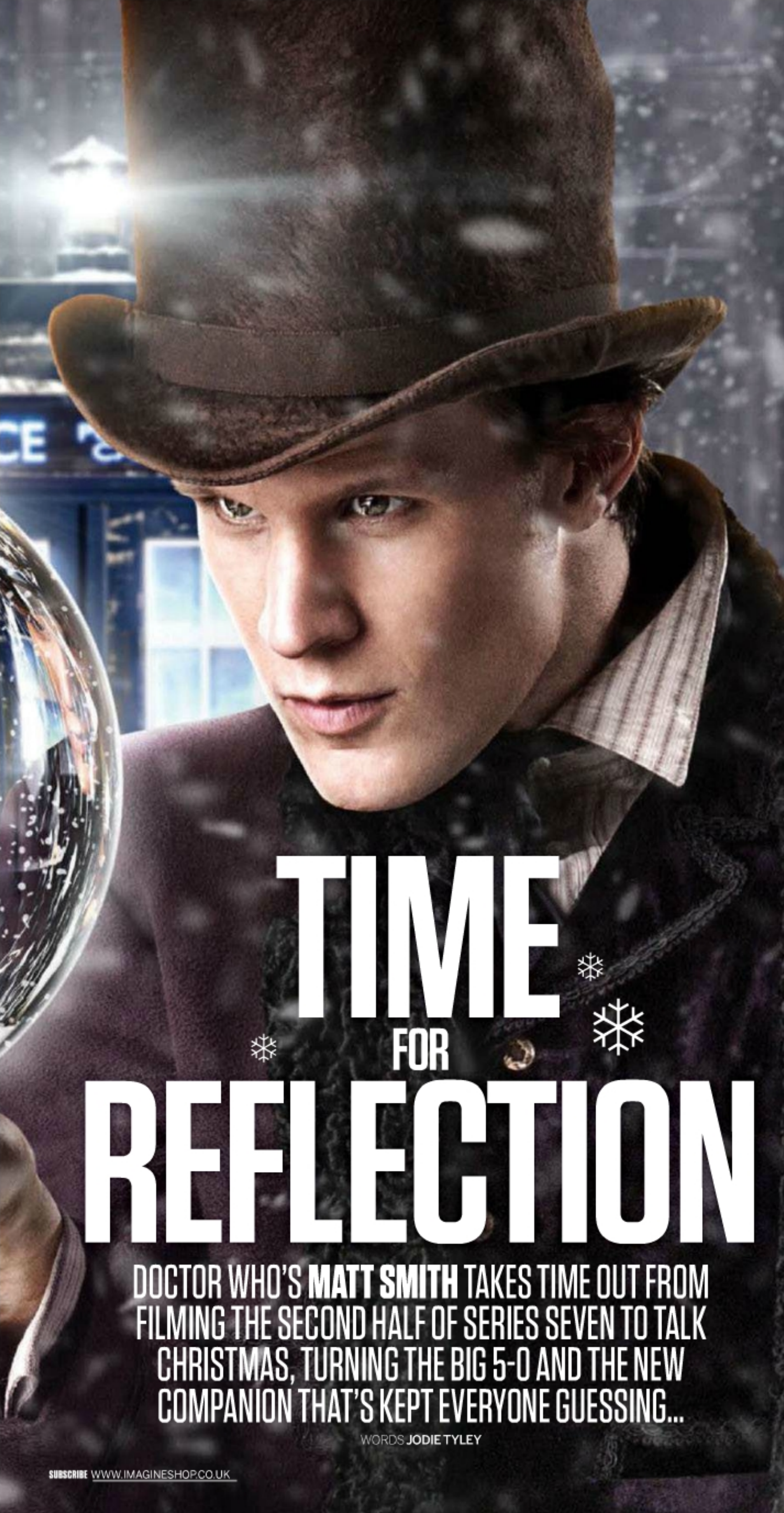
Legacies 1.06

When *Arrow* first opened fire, comparisons to *Smallville* were never far away, but 'Legacies' brings them all crashing back in as we're given some chocolate sprinkle moralising, a love triangle (or square) and a bit of family drama. It's only a matter of time before Oli is helping the hallucinatory ghost of Robert Queen oil his tractor or chop wood.

VERDICT ★★★★★







Away from the pressures of saving the world on *Doctor Who*, Matt Smith is much more relaxed than his frantic TV counterpart; in fact, he's a bit of a sloucher. Grabbing a rare quiet moment backstage at London's MCM Expo, he slumps in a chair across from SciFiNow before meeting thousands of fans and cosmic, cosplaying Time Lords and aliens. It's a demanding gig both on set and off-duty when you're so recognisable that a trip to the supermarket causes children to halt like Weeping Angels in the fruit and veg aisle. "Some kids sort of freeze, like this –" he marvels, letting his jaw drop and his eyes boggle. "It's always amazing, because you're like, 'Hey! What's going on?' and then they look at their mum like, 'What is going on?' That's what's been wonderful about being in the show – it's watched by children."

It's not just pint-sized sentient beings that enjoy time-traveling on a Saturday night, though. Since Smith joined, the show has successfully gone Stateside for the first time in *Who*-story, in the process sending his own star status rocketing. As the youngest Doctor, he's taken the Time Lord beyond guardian of the human race and to new realms of respectability as a fashion icon. His indie band hairdo, on-trend tweed jacket and ankle-high boots belong in the thread-aware districts of London. Even the TARDIS was drafted into the vintage craze, with its central console made up of antique gadgets, including a gramophone speaker, a typewriter and Eighties touchphone. Out of uniform, Smith's dressed-down togs are much less flamboyant. He's wearing skinny jeans, a khaki shirt and a black leather jacket that's concealing... a Dalek. Asked whether he collects anything at conventions, he whips out a miniature Supreme Controller from his breast pocket. "When I first started this job, a little boy gave me a Dalek, and I've kept it," he says, bringing a whole new meaning to the motto 'keep your enemies close...' "This is three years old. His arm's a bit droopy, but I keep it in this jacket."

POST SERIES SEVEN, SMITH WILL HAVE SURPASSED DAVID TENNANT'S RECORD AS THE LONGEST SERVING DOCTOR IN NEW WHO. THREE YEARS ON, WE'RE PLEASED TO REPORT

that he still gets the same buzz from wielding the sonic screwdriver. "I was filming yesterday, and I can't even begin to explain..." he says, flexing his fingers in search of words to describe Part Two. "It was this wonderful set with this array of particular characters, and it was like a fairy land of an alien world. It was remarkable, and me and Jenna [Louise Coleman] were just going, 'Good day at work, right?'" Now we're past the initial five-episode run, the latter half of

TIME FOR REFLECTION

DOCTOR WHO'S **MATT SMITH** TAKES TIME OUT FROM FILMING THE SECOND HALF OF SERIES SEVEN TO TALK CHRISTMAS, TURNING THE BIG 5-0 AND THE NEW COMPANION THAT'S KEPT EVERYONE GUESSING...

WORDS JODIE TYLEY



MUST-SEE TV

Doctor Who



“NEIL GAIMAN HAS THIS WONDERFUL ABILITY TO THINK OUTSIDE OF THE BOX”
MATT SMITH

Series Seven is going to hone in on the new girl, as Smith continues, “It was all about the fall of the Ponds and their demise, and this season will be all about the new companion and introducing her into the world of *Doctor Who*. It’s one of the really exciting things about this show – that transition and change and the anticipation that creates. I was talking to Steven Moffat about it the other day, and we were saying when I started there was a sort of uproar at my age... when Daniel Craig started [as 007] there was uproar: ‘How can Daniel Craig be James Bond?’ And now look at him – on the cusp of the greatest James Bond movie ever!”

Of course, the early Sixties signalled the start of another British institution, and at 6.15pm on 23 November 1963, the BBC debuted its new family science fiction show. In 2013, the Doctor celebrates half a century on Earth, and Smith believes it can be every bit as big as the Bond extravaganza. “That’s the plan completely,” he says, “I think for it to get to 50 is remarkable, and I’m very proud to be in a show with that history, heritage and legacy. To be the incumbent Doctor when it’s his birthday is fantastic. We’re going to make it the biggest year of the show ever – on a global scale, hopefully. There’s the genesis of the



Is this the first we see of Jenna-Louise Coleman’s new companion?



Saturday Night At The Movies

Series Seven, Part One aimed to deliver mini movies every week. Here’s the story so far...

‘ASYLUM OF THE DALEKS’



The pitch: The Doctor and the Ponds (on the verge of divorce) end up in the Asylum, where the mad Daleks are banished.

Did you know? In the room where Rory stumbles upon the Daleks, the special weapons model from Eighties episode ‘Remembrance Of The Daleks’ can be seen.

‘DINOSAURS ON A SPACESHIP’



The pitch: Rory inadvertently brings his dad along for a space adventure with Queen Nefertiti and hunter John Riddell.

Did you know? Both David Bradley (Solomon) and Mark Williams (Brian) appeared in the *Harry Potter* films (as Filch and Mr Weasley respectively).

‘A TOWN CALLED MERCY’



The pitch: The gang travel to the Wild Wild West, where the townsfolk are under threat from a renegade cyborg

who’s bent on revenge.

Did you know? This was the second *Doctor Who* episode to be filmed in Spain. The first was ‘The Two Doctors’.

‘THE POWER OF THREE’



The pitch: Earth is invaded by tiny black cubes, and the trio must watch carefully to see what they mean for humanity.

Did you know? This was the last episode filmed with Karen Gillan and Arthur Darvill. When they entered the TARDIS and closed the doors, the actors all hugged.



Doctor [*Adventures In Space And Time*, a documentary by Mark Gatiss] and we'll obviously make a 50th anniversary episode special, and then they'll be all sorts of live events that surround that. We're going to make it a big year for *Doctor Who* on the BBC."

UNTIL RECENTLY, THE ONLY TYPICALLY SIXTIES THING LEFT ABOUT DOCTOR WHO WAS THE METROPOLITAN POLICE PUBLIC CALL BOX, BUT NOW THE ANNIVERSARY

is fast approaching, the writers are getting nostalgic. The premiere episode of Series Seven, 'Asylum Of The Daleks', included some authentic exterminators, and now novelist-turned-*Who*-dabbler Neil Gaiman seems to be following suit as he takes control of the Cybermen. He's revealed plans to return them to their near-silent Sixties circuitry, as well as incorporating "everything that's happened since". It's an ambitious premise, but unsurprising when you consider that his first foray into the Whoniverse explored the relationship between the Doctor and his TARDIS, played by actress Suranne Jones. In the episode 'The Doctor's Wife', we discovered that she chose him rather than the other way around, and witnessed some wonderful exchanges between the pair (Doctor: "You didn't always take me where I wanted to go"; TARDIS: "No, but I always took you where you needed to go"). "What Neil does is he comes in with a brilliant initial idea, which only a man of his mind could do," says Smith. "If you take something like *American Gods*, you go 'How? Where?' I can't kind of correlate it. He has this wonderful ability to think outside of the box, and it really lends itself to fantasy and science fiction."

Running themes surrounding the Eleventh Doctor are his love of hats – from the top-kind to a Fez and a Stetson – and a willingness to jump aboard any moving thing, including a horse and a Triceratops. Sneak peeks from next series reveal the two passions combined as Smith and Coleman were spotted riding a Triumph motorcycle across London Bridge with the Fez in tow. Despite pap pics exposing Smith's lack

of expertise in keeping the bike upright, he is adamant that the prehistoric beast in 'Dinosaurs On A Spaceship' was the trickiest to ride. "The Triceratops was a nightmare," he says, "I had to wear special pants because the curve of the dinosaur was actually metal. So we're all sat there going, 'Well, you know where you're sat with that curve!' And there's this great big metal thing just digging into your goonies." The Evel Knievel antics will feature in episode six when the series returns in spring 2013, along with a companion that looks like she's stepped out of Topshop rather than the Victorian era.

We'll start to uncover what this mysterious brunette will mean to the Doctor, since every TARDIS-traveler has their own unique impact on the Time Lord. Amy was known for giving him a verbal slap every time he slipped into alien territory, and even River Song says he needs someone around to keep him grounded. So what kind of Doctor is he with Clara on board? "It's something that you learn as you go quite a lot of the time, because obviously I don't know Jenna when she gets the job, just like any job, but this particularly where their relationship throughout the show is so important to the story, it's something that is constantly evolving as you get to know each other a bit better," he says. "But, of course, we meet him having lost Amy and Rory, who were a very important part of his life, so we meet a slightly different version of him. I think being with anyone – being with a different actress, being with a different character – ultimately it's going to change you."

Speaking of change, we couldn't leave without asking the question that everyone wants to know the answer to. Not 'Doctor Who?' but 'Doctor for how long?' Both Moffat and Smith have shirked regeneration rumours surrounding the 50th, but the actor is coy when it comes to the specifics. "I take it year by year, you know? See what comes," he says. "I love working for Steven Moffat and I love making the show; it's unlike any job I'll ever have, and I'm proud going into the 50th year." One thing that won't be factoring into his decision, though, is a fear of typecasting. "There are bigger things to worry about," he insists. "Who cares? If people want to typecast me they can, I

can sit and have my egg sandwich and not really give a damn about it."



Doctor Who: Series Seven, Part One is available on DVD and Blu-ray now.

SNOW JOKE

The Doctor battles an army of evil snowmen this year. Matt Smith, villain Richard E Grant and victim Tom Ward tell us what to expect...



Richard E Grant takes on baddie duties this Christmas.

Each year, showrunner Steven Moffat seems to look to the classics for inspiration. We've had the *Christmas Carol*-inspired Katherine Jenkins-starrer in 2010; CS Lewis' *The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe* in 2011 and this year is set to put a dark and toothy spin on Raymond Briggs' *The Snowman*. The Doctor must save Christmas by battling an army of snowmen, but he's uncharacteristically not feeling the festive spirit.

Writer Moffat revealed that the Time Lord is struggling to move past the Ponds' goodbye. "He's lost Amy and Rory to the Weeping Angels, and he's not in a good place: in face, he's a Scrooge. He's withdrawn from the world and no longer cares what happens to it. So when all of humanity hangs in the balance, can anyone persuade a heartbroken Doctor that it's time to return to the good fight? Enter Jenna-Louise Coleman..."

It won't be the first time we've met the Doctor's companion-in-waiting, but she's not playing Oswin Oswald, the unfortunate mutilated girl from 'Asylum Of The Daleks'. Coleman admitted that she couldn't be playing the same person, since

WHEN YOU'RE BORN WITH A TEN-FOOT LONG FACE, YOU DON'T GET HERO ROLES
RICHARD E GRANT

Oswin died at the end of the Series Seven opener. This time, she will be a 19th Century Governess who takes care of a widower – Captain Latimer, played by Tom Ward – and his two children.

We chatted to the *Silent Witness* alumni to discover more about the ex-Navyman, her employer and avid

admirer. "He's obviously a man of authority, but very shy and awkward both around his children and his young Governess, who he has strong feelings for but doesn't know how to tell her," says Ward. "She finds it sweet, but rather funny and slightly sad."

Fans will also recognise a few other familiar faces, as Matt Smith reveals. "We've got Vastra, Jenny and Strax making a return appearance, which is terribly exciting," he says, referring to the more eccentric supporting cast from 'A Good Man Goes To War'. "And it does the sort of wonderful *Doctor Who*-ey Christmas things – you know: snow, aliens, good will, good cheer, someone trying to take over the world. Hopefully, it makes for good Christmas Day telly."

The action orbits Darkover House, which becomes a conductor for the evil force that's manifesting. Richard E Grant is taking on the role of the villain. "When you're born with a ten-foot long face, you don't get hero roles," he told us, marking his third turn in the world of *Who* after the 'Scream Of The Shalka' webisode and 'Curse Of The Fatal Death' Red Nose Day one-shot.

He's a 'Doctor' once more, only this time he's called Doctor Simeon. The actor admits that come Christmas Day, he will be on the sofa waiting for *Who*. "I love Christmas and everything about it, and I'll be watching TV after lunch. I hope I can stay awake after the feast!"

'The Snowmen' will air 25 December on BBC One.

'THE ANGELS TAKE MANHATTAN'



The pitch: The Ponds are transported to the States, where even the Statue of Liberty is a Weeping Angel.

Did you know?

There was a scene penned by Chris Chibnall that was never shot, but made its way to YouTube, featuring Rory's goodbye to Brian from the past.





Doctor Who's MONSTER MAKERS

BEHIND THE SCENES (AND SCREAMS) WITH SERIES SEVEN'S CREATURE CREATORS

He's chased viewers behind their sofas all over the world with the Weeping Angels, Silurians and more. FX wizard Neill Gorton takes us through the creation of some of the show's iconic monsters...

WORDS JOE NAZZARO

It's tough to keep a secret on *Doctor Who*. In a conversation with Millennium FX chief Neill Gorton, for example, about his company's work on the show, the make-up supremo refuses to provide any specifics, but does note that 'a very big return thing' will be shot on location in just a few days. Sure enough, a week later, the internet is flooded with photos of Gorton's newly redesigned Cybermen.

Gorton is proud of his team's work. "We always try to give them a mini-movie feel," he explains, "including our animatronic triceratops in 'Dinosaurs On A Spaceship.' We also did the Gunslinger character [for 'A Town Called Mercy'], which was more of a standard cyborg, but it was a fun character to do, and I got to direct the 'prequel' for that episode.

"Marcus [Wilson] the producer had seen a short film I did, and said, 'We're doing these little two-minute DVD extras; would you like to do one with the Gunslinger?' The *Doctor Who* crew was made available for a day and we managed to get the actor [Andrew Brooke] back, so that was fun to do. I'm hoping if they do more of them, they'll let me have another go at it.

"We also did an old age make-up on Arthur Darvill for Rory's deathbed scene. The producers didn't want to use an older actor, and Arthur wanted it to be him as well. That's the beauty of working on this show: in just three episodes you've got dinosaurs, cyborgs and an old age make-up; that's a fabulous variety of things."

Gorton is especially proud of his animatronic dinosaur, which was originally intended to be an all-digital character until he pointed out that the episode lent itself to a physical creature. "I said, 'Look, there are ways of building a great head and body and blending it with CGI, but if it's all CGI it's very hard for the actors to interact with it. The shot of Matt Smith with the dying dinosaur was changed on the day, because they could actually get up close and work with it a lot more... it was so much better than doing it against a green screen."

"Cost-wise, you pay per shot with CGI, whereas you pay just once for animatronic characters, and you can shoot it as much as you want. That really helped with the budget, because they could get more

shots than with CGI and get it done right, plus everybody got into this spirit of having this blooming great dinosaur on set. I don't think anybody anticipated seeing something of that scale brought to life in front of them!"

The team also helped bring back the Weeping Angels. "We dusted off some of the old stuff, but came up with some new looks for broken-down and damaged angels, and we did the cherubs as well. The cherubs had to be models, so we had a team sculpting different ones with interchangeable arms and heads to get a range of poses. I wasn't sure if they were going to look creepy, but they really work."

Gorton is amused that some viewers don't realise that most of the Weeping Angels are actors.

"The body painting, full-head facial prosthetics, costume elements and interchangeable parts; they're actually quite complicated, especially when you have several different angles in a shot. "We did build a couple of actual statues, but they can only do one ➔





As well as creating the Gunslinger from 'A Town Called Mercy', Neill also directed a prequel short to the episode.

Seventies Sontaran in terms of the face and shorter stature, so we took something we felt had lost its way design-wise and tried to put it back on track a little bit.

"One character I always found interesting was Davros, where I've never heard a single negative comment. With nearly every character we've done, there's always somebody that says, 'I prefer the original; you shouldn't have touched it!' but with Davros I never heard a bad word. I think the overall impression people got was that we didn't change it, but it's completely different. While we went back to the Seventies Michael Wisher look, if you look at my Davros and the original, there are a lot of differences, so just a bit of an illusion. Every other character has had some sort of comment, but with Davros there's never been a peep."

Looking ahead, Gorton has no shortage of projects to keep him busy. In addition to *Doctor Who* and the current season of *Being Human*, Millennium are also working on the new CBBC series *Wizards Vs Aliens*. "I've got a meeting next week to start planning Series Two, and I've been reliably told that there are going to be a lot more new characters. By all accounts, Season One has gone down very well, so that's all good news. The value on the screen is amazing considering it's CBBC, so I think we're all quite proud of the quality of the show."

"RUSSELL T DAVIES LIKED HIS FUN ANIMAL PEOPLE AND THINGS LIKE THAT; STEVEN MOFFAT WANTS MORE CHARACTERS LIKE THE SILENCE" NEILL GORTON

pose, so we use actors 90 per cent of the time, but nobody refers to how good the make-up is, because they don't understand that's what it is. The viewer has to believe it's a solid object, but you're basically looking at a soft rubber face that is supposed to be stone, so we put a lot of work into making sure the paint finish is right. Doing that is a complicated process, but it's a credit to our team that people don't notice."

IT'S BEEN SEVEN YEARS SINCE GORTON AND MILLENNIUM FX SIGNED ON FOR THE NEWLY REBOOTED DOCTOR WHO. WHILE THE LEAD ACTORS AND PRODUCTION TEAM HAVE COME AND GONE, THE MILLENNIUM TEAM IS ONE OF THE

few groups that has remained from day one. That has helped provide the series with a unique visual aesthetic. "I think the continuity is that it's still us doing it," notes Gorton, "so you're always going to have my influence, as well as [partner] Rob Mayor's influence and the way we approach the work."

"Everyone has a bit of a signature to their work, so people can look at ours and spot it as Millennium. It's not something I can necessarily see, but I can look at other companies and spot their signatures."

"With Steven Moffat as producer, it's not that we tried to make anything look particularly darker or meaner, but the stories have been down that line. Where Russell [T Davies] liked his fun animal people and things like that, Steven wants more characters like the Silence, so the nature of the stories drives any change; he believes *Doctor Who* should be scary, so we design scary things."

The Cybermen aren't the only monsters from the original series to be given a facelift. "With the Silurians, I actually loved the old ones," claims Gorton, "which were a little bit goofy and Seventies-looking, but they

were proper dinosaur people, and there was something cool about them that I thought could be tweaked into something much more 21st Century. But when the scripts came in, the producers said, 'We want something more human... I thought, 'But that's not a Silurian!' Why don't we just come up with a different alien?'

"I know a lot of people get upset when things change, but no one ever does anything just for the sake of it. If you look at the later Sontarans, they were atrocious, so we wanted to design something more like the classic

As for the remainder of *Doctor Who* Series Seven, "I just got the script yesterday for the final episode," says Gorton, "so we shoot that in a few weeks and we're finished. The second half has been enormously busy, and we're knee-deep in stuff as we speak. We've got a big crew, and there's a lot going on!"



Doctor Who: Series Seven, Part One is out now on DVD and Blu-ray, priced at £18 and £20.49 respectively.



Neill admits to worrying about whether the cherubs would be sufficiently scary, but believes they "really work".

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A large, detailed model of a Pteranodon is the central focus of the image. It is positioned in a forest, with its wings spread wide. The model has a brownish-grey body and a large, dark, leathery wing membrane. Its head is turned towards the right, showing a long, sharp beak and a small crest. The background is a dense forest of tall, thin trees with green foliage. The lighting is natural, suggesting daylight. The overall composition is a full-page spread from a magazine or book.

SET VISIT
PRIMEVAL: NEW WORLD

SET VISIT

PRIMEVAL:

WORDS MICHAEL SIMPSON

NEW

ITV1'S DINO HUNTING ALL-AGES SCI-FI ROMP PRIMEVAL MAY HAVE LIMPED TO A SORRY CONCLUSION, BUT THE CONCEPT IS FAR FROM SPENT, CROSSING THE ATLANTIC AND SETTING UP SHOP IN CANADA WITH AN ALMOST ALL-NEW CAST AND CREW OF SCI-FI VETERANS, INCLUDING STARGATE AND SANCTUARY'S AMANDA TAPPING AS DIRECTOR. WE GO BEHIND THE SCENES IN THE VERY REAL LAB COMPLEX THAT SERVES AS THE BASE FOR PRIMEVAL: NEW WORLD TO DISCOVER HOW THE SHOW WOULD RATHER EVOLVE THAN GO EXTINCT...

WORLD

As we walk down the corridor of an industrial building in Maple Ridge on the outskirts of Vancouver's suburban sprawl, it's easy for SciFiNow to imagine that we have already entered the *Primeval* universe. Before arriving to visit the main set of the new Canadian spin-off, *Primeval: New World*, we were told that we should only go into designated parts of the building. It's exactly the kind of instruction you would expect if this really was the headquarters of a secret operation to ensure that prehistoric animals remain in the past.

Somewhere in this former factory is the TANK, the base of operations for the franchise's newest team of dinosaur hunters. As we pass humming turbines and banks of switches, we try to guess whether the people going by are extras on the show or employees of the R&D facility that still operates here. At one point a serious-looking man in a blue lab coat squeezes past with a trolley carrying two large gas cylinders.

PRIMEVAL: NEW WORLD DOESN'T PRETEND TO BE THE BRITISH SERIES

AMANDA TAPPING

The crew is almost halfway through filming 13 episodes, and the designs of the digital dinosaurs are being kept under wraps. We do, however, get some hints from the man supervising the VFX team, *Stargate* veteran Mark Savelle. "The real trick is creating something that you have never seen, and what we've all come back to is *Jurassic Park*," he explains. "It was such a milestone. It was so good looking. It really set the bar, and even 20 years later that's been one of our big references. And there's so much new in dinosaur history. Now, the dinosaurs have feathers and fur. So we've gone back to basics and then hopefully expanded on that, so you'll see some pretty exciting-looking dinosaurs."

The interview with Savelle is in a large white room that feels uncomfortably like a meat cooler. We happily leave it and continue on to the TANK, passing rooms containing technical equipment and trays of batteries. These look like they could be props for Cross Photonics, the fictional hi-tech company owned by multi-millionaire anomaly chaser Evan Cross, who is played by *Eureka*'s Niall Matter. "Cross becomes a man obsessed with getting to the bottom of these anomalies; how they occur, how can he stop them, what comes in and out of them and why is it happening?" Matter tells SciFiNow during a break in filming. "All of his research goes into that. He still runs his company with the help of his best friend, Ange Finch (Miranda Frigon). Without her the company would be obsolete. She keeps the thing going because Evan is completely obsessed with figuring out this other side of his personal life." ➤



**THE REAL TRICK IS
CREATING SOMETHING THAT
YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN**
MARK SVELA

➔ We find Cross's HQ in a large room in a back corner of the factory. His office is on an upper level above several glass-fronted rooms filled with camera equipment and computers. The staircase up to it passes another room containing books on animal tracks and other natural history topics. As we enter Cross's office, we notice a whiteboard covered with complex equations, as well as several neat stacks of scientific journals on the floor. "The biggest thing with Evan is that he is very OCD, and I actually have that exact same quality in my personal life," Matter says. "It will become known to audiences later on why he is so OCD and what the significance of his OCD is."

AS THE CREW SETS UP ANOTHER SCENE BELOW, SCIFINOW SPOTS MATTER'S ROOMMATE AND CO-STAR DANNY RAHIM. THE 26-YEAR OLD BRITISH ACTOR LANDED A ROLE IN PRIMEVAL: NEW WORLD AFTER AUDITIONING IN the UK. Today, he is dressed in nothing but jeans and a lab coat, and from what Matter tells us there's a danger he could remove them at any moment. "Danny Rahim is a constant challenge for me because we'll be doing blocking and all of a sudden he'll just have his pants down and his arse is out," Matter says. "Two days ago I'm walking into the scene behind him and all of a

sudden his bare arse is out. He was dead serious, too, going through the rehearsal."

This reputation as a prankster is one Rahim embraces, but he is also a dedicated professional with a desire to learn. "I'm always asking questions," Rahim says. "That and making sure we are seeing the same kind of dinosaur and you're not overplaying or underplaying have probably been the biggest challenges. And making sure that technically I am as accurate as I can be so when they get to the edit they keep my stuff in and they don't go, 'Where was Danny looking? He was seeing a 20-foot dinosaur and it's only two feet high.'"

Not only do Rahim and Matter live together; they also have similar histories. Before a serious accident steered him towards acting, Matter worked in Alberta's oil patch because, in his own words, he was a "badass". Similarly, Rahim describes himself as "a bit of a naughty boy at school" who only got into acting when he was put on report. That experience has served Rahim well in the role of Cross's head of security, Mac Rendell. "He's one of these kids that could have quite easily got lost and ended up in jail or doing something he shouldn't have done, so options were becoming very limited for him," Rahim says. "Evan comes one day and knocks on his





door and talks about having known his father and offers him a job, basically. Mac, being the outgoing person and having this sort of joie de vivre and embracing life, takes up this opportunity and comes over, and then becomes [the] security at Evan Cross's firm."

Rahim is not the only British actor to turn up on the set of *Primeval: New World*, of course: Andrew Lee Potts makes a well publicised appearance in the series' premiere. Although he's not passing the baton, his role is clearly to link the show to its origins. "He was a great crossover, and so fantastic that he was there sort of handing over the reins," says fan favourite Amanda Tapping as she prepares at Vancouver's Bridge Studios to direct an episode. "But *Primeval: New World* doesn't pretend to be the British series."

It's clear from speaking to Tapping, who directs three episodes, that the production team is trying to give the spin-off its own identity. "This is a Canadian show and we don't hide the fact that we're in Vancouver," says Tapping. "It's liberating to be able to show this gorgeous city and the setting and not hide it. I think the very nature of the fact that we're shooting in Vancouver gives us a different palette than London. To be able to shoot up in the mountains and also to have a city by the ocean, it just gives it a different feel. *Primeval* in London ➔

PRIMEVAL: NEW WORLD

SET VISIT

Primeval versus Extinction

Primeval's highs and lows in the fight to stay on air

NEW WORLD ERA



New World Era (2012)

Opening Ratings: 134,000 (Canada)

Closing Ratings: TBC

The *Primeval* universe gets a whole new cast and promises a more adult tone and a new lease of life. Dinosaurs walk the Earth once more, but how long will they be sticking around for this time?

SERIES FIVE ERA



Series Five Era (2011)

Opening Ratings: 2.6 million

Closing Ratings: 1.7 million

Series Five airs on Watch and is repeated on ITV1, giving the ratings a huge kick in the nads. Series Six is talked about, along with a movie, but both seem unrealistic as Hannah Spearritt admits to SciFiNow that she's looking beyond genre, while Andrew Lee Potts heads off to join Canadian spin-off *New World*.

SERIES FOUR ERA



Series Four Era (2011)

Opening Ratings: 4.45 million

Closing Ratings: 4.09 million

The longest gap between series so far is bridged by five webisodes, but the meteor is definitely hurtling towards the primordial Eden of the dino-hunting sci-fi show as Series Four is a cost sharing deal between ITV, BBC Worldwide, Watch, Impossible Pictures and the German broadcaster ProSieben.

SERIES ONE TO THREE ERA



Series One to Three Era (2007-2009)

Opening Ratings: 7.09 million

Closing Ratings: 5.01 million

Reviews were promising and ratings were solid as the effects folk behind *Walking With Dinosaurs* let everyone know just how good they'd gotten at rendering prehistoric oddities. So it's a shock when ITV cancelled it, although it was revived for a fourth season.



A Primeval Primer

Never seen the show before? Don't let that put you off New World, as we explain some of the recurring plot devices...

ANOMALY: The semi-stable holes in space and time in which – at first – prehistoric creatures make themselves known, and then eventually vicious killers from the far future.

ANOMALY DETECTION DEVICE: A big computer with hand-held variants about the size of an Eighties mobile phone by which the original ARC team track Anomalies, also known as ADDs.

ANOMALY LOCKING MECHANISM: A device used by the original ARC to stop critters from bursting through Anomalies by – and *Doctor Who* fans will love this – “reversing the polarity” of the Anomaly.

ARC: Anomaly Research Centre, both the organisation in which the original show's dino-hunters belonged and their physical base. ARC is the headquarters of ARC – get it? The fans call themselves ‘ARCadians’, which is a surprisingly classical reference.

ELECTRO MUSCULAR DISRUPTION WEAPON: Or EMDs, energy weapons from the future adopted by the original ARC circa-Series Four. Available in various models, they have three settings – low, medium and high – and are powered by nuclear power cells.

FUTURE PREDATORS: Terrifying killing machines possibly evolved from rats or bats, available in mutant and non-mutant forms. They seem to exist in every possible future timeline, even the ones in which the events behind their creation by ARC don't come to pass. Pretty bleak for a ‘family’ show, isn't it?

THE TANK: The *New World* team's base and the Canadian answer to ARC. Possibly the fans will call themselves TANKies. That'd be cute.

TIME TRIBE: People from different periods of time who have banded together to wander nomadically through anomalies from era to era throughout history. A conscientious (albeit damaged) bunch, they avoid contact with other humans so as not to interfere with history.



Primeval: New World sees the ushering in of a new era and a whole new cast.

➤ is so... It's an iconic city and it's got a very different vibe from here, and so you feel that in the show. The location is just as much another character.”

A core of strong characters has helped the British series survive despite several major cast changes and once being left for dead by its network. That is a quality that *Primeval: New World*'s production team is intent on replicating. “If you don't care about the characters, it doesn't matter whether they have dinosaurs or spaceships or anything that these people are dealing with,” Tapping says. “If you don't care about the core group of people, you're not going to watch the show.”

Back on set, SciFiNow is shown a brief teaser trailer of the series that reveals a more cinematic style and another distinct difference between the British show and *Primeval: New World*. “It's a little edgier, a little darker and there's a little more gore in it,” says Miranda Frigon when we catch up with her briefly. “It's probably not something my grandmother's going to want to watch me on.”

After seeing what she means first-hand, we're not sure how we feel about breaking for lunch. Outside catering, however, we meet the bubbly Crystal Lowe, who plays Cross's right-hand woman, Toby Nance. The Scottish/Chinese actress can be seen in the Canadian crowd-sourced horror film *A Little Bit Zombie* and has a long list of TV credits, including four episodes of *Smallville*. Nance is her first role as a series regular,

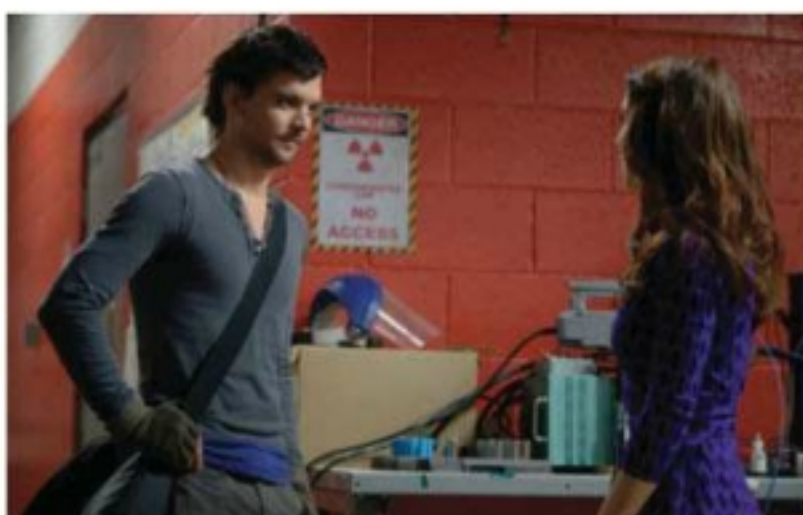
though. “Toby is 25, she's a scientist, she's really brilliant, but she's also young and excited,” says Lowe. “She's totally about the science: science, science, science. Personally, Crystal Lowe isn't. I want to pet dinosaurs, but Toby wants to study them, help and fix them and put them back together.”

HISTORY SHOWS, HOWEVER, THAT SCI-FI SERIES MUST APPEAL TO MORE THAN JUST ADMIRERS OF GENRE FAVOURITES IF THEY ARE TO SURVIVE. EVERY SERIES NEEDS A HOOK THAT APPEALS TO A WIDER AUDIENCE,

which brings us back to dinosaurs. As *Jurassic Park* proved and pre-teen boys everywhere will attest, few things have broader appeal than the sight of a giant, slobbering reptile. We leave the set still having not seen one, and indeed the first teaser footage – shown at Vancouver Fan Expo in April 2012 – used dinosaurs from the original *Primeval* intercut with newly shot live-action scenes. *Terra Nova*, which dealt with similar subject matter on a greater budget and with a more mainstream cast, crew and premise – rightly or wrongly – was dogged by constant accusations that there wasn't enough seen of the various thunder lizards. That the show's ratings went into free fall and was ultimately cancelled in the face of much fan outrage is certainly a cautionary tale (a particularly chilling one given ‘terra nova’ is Latin for ‘new world’) for this new incarnation of *Primeval*, but Rahim offers some comfort.

“Mark Savelle and his team are incredible, and I can't wait to see with technology advancing how real these things are going to look. Martin Wood showed us a teaser that Mark and his team put together as a pitch for the show, and it was something they put together in two weeks. It was three dinosaurs... running around different environments. We were just sitting at the computer going, ‘Holy smokes, that is incredible.’”

Primeval: New World is airing now on Space in Canada, and coming to Watch in the UK and Syfy in the US in January 2013.



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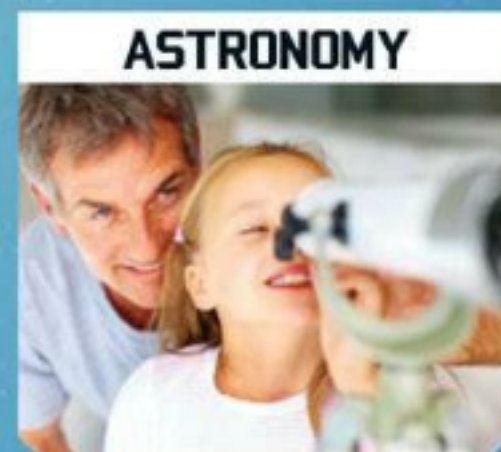
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THE FUTURE OF STAR WARS®

WORDS JODIE TYLEY, JAMES HOARE, STEVE WRIGHT

Can Disney offer a New Hope for the Star Wars® franchise? Industry insiders examine the facts, the opportunities and the galaxy-sized risks for sci-fi's most beloved saga from Episode VII and beyond...



First Pixar, then Marvel, now Lucasfilm – Disney is monopolising the biggest pop culture franchises in history. But now that the House of Mouse has bought the latter for \$4.5 billion (£2.5bn), it now effectively owns most of our childhoods, too. Should we be alarmed? After all, Disney recently tried – and failed – to join the space race with *John Carter*, in the process taking a \$200m sucker punch to the bank account. The head of Disney's film studio, Rich Ross, packed up his things and headed for the exit, which leaves us wondering whether the *Star Wars* franchise really is in safe hands, since they only have four fingers – which themselves are stuffed into conspicuously white gloves.

We spoke to Box Office Analyst Karie Bible of Exhibitor Relations to discover the reasons behind the biggest loss on a single film in recent history. "When a film flops at this level, there is always plenty of blame to go around," she says. "First off, the film went over budget and was reported to have cost \$250 million, while another \$100 million was spent on marketing. Given the cost alone it would have been very difficult for the film to break even, much less make a profit.

The source material based on the character by Edgar Rice Burroughs is not exactly a major draw for younger audiences. This was also director Andrew Stanton's first foray into making a live-action movie. The production had costly re-shoots, and *John Carter* also didn't have any recognisable stars, which in this case might have helped matters. Stanton also clashed with Disney's marketing department, causing further problems over how to sell the film. Bad reviews piled up and the film sank."

Hardly a clean record, then, particularly when it comes to developing new franchises in-house. It's no wonder *Star Wars* was such a lip-smacking, chequebook-quivering offer when the films have collectively pooled \$4.54bn at the box office. This leaves Luke Skywalker and co second only to Warner Bros' *Harry Potter* saga, but no amount of chocolate frogs and Slytherin scarves in the *Potter* Studios' gift shop can outsell the *Star Wars* toys. The website 24/7 Wall St evaluated the value of the *Star Wars* brand in early 2012, coming back with an answer of over \$30.5bn. Perhaps it wasn't entirely in jest, then, when creator George Lucas said Walt Disney would be his retirement fund. In addition to a huge wodge of cash,

A LONG TIME TO COME...

A not entirely serious and factually inaccurate look at the future of the *Star Wars* saga

2013

The *Star Wars* comics make the inevitable move from Dark Horse to Marvel – a transition which is greeted by much fan over-reaction regarding the likelihood of a possible team-up between Donald Duck, Boba Fett and Captain America to take down Galactus.

2014

The Clone Wars: Season Six debuts on Disney XD after its deal with Cartoon Network expires. It is the much publicised final season for the show, with the fates of fan-favourite characters like Ahsoka Tano and, er, Rex, being finally revealed.

2015

Star Wars: Episode VII hits theatres in Real 3D to a barrage of hype and merchandising, encompassing a new toyline, Heroclix and videogames of variable quality.

2016

Spin-offs *Bounty Hunter* and *Jedi Knight* hit theatres, based around Episode VII's two new POV characters, the children of Leia and Han – renamed with the express purpose of irritating Expanded Universe fans.

STAR WARS

The Future Of Star Wars



Whatever happens, it wouldn't be *Star Wars* without these two guys...

he also got \$40 million in Disney shares. The man he sold his legacy to – chairman and chief executive of Disney Robert Iger – is accustomed to splurging Mickey's money on film studios, having previously acquired Pixar from a trio that included the late Apple co-founder Steve Jobs. Disney bought it for \$7bn in 2006, and by the time the ink was dry they had already produced the first in a megabucks-making franchise, *Toy Story*. Just three years later, Disney swallowed Marvel and its 5,000 eccentric characters – including Spider-Man and the X-Men – and proved concerned shareholders wrong by delivering the third most successful film ever, *Avengers Assemble*.

"There is no doubt in my mind that each *Star Wars* film will be good for around \$1 billion worldwide," says Karie Bible, the first of which will be Episode VII, in cinemas in 2015. "And if even one of them is spectacular, it may end up challenging *Avatar* as the highest grossing film in the history of cinema. That's why Disney took the gamble, and it's one any studio in town would have taken. *Star Wars* is the crown jewel of fandom films." According to Iger, iconic characters that have global reach are even more valuable in these multi-media times. "Technology has proved more friend than foe to great storytelling. It allows us to distribute in ways we never thought would have been imaginable."

"EACH NEW STAR WARS FILM WILL BE GOOD FOR AROUND \$1 BILLION WORLDWIDE"
KARIE BIBLE

It's the storytelling that Disney will be focusing on going forward, according to Jeff Bock, Box Office Analyst at ERC. "I think that everybody realises how beloved the first trilogy was, and after these new ones came out it introduced *Star Wars* to new fans, but you can't say that they were more popular than the Batman films or *The Avengers*," he tells us. "They want to get back to being the most exciting films that were ever shown on screen, like the original ones were. They will go back to the storytelling; the story is the king. If you capture that and then add the special effects and the sci-fi locations, that's what people want to see. They don't want to see a romance between Natalie Portman and a young Hayden Christensen; that's taking up precious few minutes of a film. When you only get 120 minutes, you don't want to waste it on a boring love affair. I think they will go back to the basics and keep the action moving ➤

2017

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of *A New Hope*, Disney releases a special Fan Edition of the Original Trilogy, with a new HD conversion and restoration of the in-camera effects. Before you ask, Han shoots first. Happy?

2018

The 'Jar Jar's Gungan Waterslide' and 'Endor Tree-Top Rampage' rides are officially opened at Disneyland Paris and Orlando. At the Orlando launch, plans for a 'Star Wars World' theme park are unveiled.

2019

Star Wars: Destiny, a co-production with a Chinese company and filmed in both Mandarin and English with cameos from the New Trilogy cast, dominates the Chinese box office and becomes the highest grossing film of all time, despite poor performance in Europe and North America.

2020

Disney declares the *Star Wars* channel open for business, screening *The Clone Wars* on repeat like *Friends*, as well as a whole new live-action series about the adventures of Leia and Han Solo's kids. The channel is also the first to sport Roman numerals.



INVESTIGATION

Star Wars



VIDEOGAMES

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE GAMING UNIVERSE?



Gamers can rest easy knowing that current projects are moving ahead as planned, according to LucasArts. That includes titles like the edgy *Star Wars 1313*, as well as a

bunch of unannounced projects. What will happen beyond that, though? It seems the future lies in social gaming – an area *Star Wars* fired into recently with the *Angry Birds* spin.

Play magazine's Samuel Roberts thinks Disney's acquisition of Playdom – the largest developer of such titles – is a sign of good things to come. "It's the perfect marriage for the company in terms of casual games, since Playdom has already produced titles based on the Marvel license that have led to massive success for Disney," he says. "LucasArts has struggled to get hardcore titles out of the door during the last eight or so years due to a constantly changing management structure that has left a number of unannounced *Star Wars* games dead in the water, like the ever-elusive *Star Wars: Battlefront III*."

"I would expect to see a lot more titles like *Angry Birds Star Wars* and a lot less games like *Knights Of The Old Republic* – that's simply where the money is now, and Disney isn't exactly synonymous with high-end, hardcore gaming experiences." We just hope we don't see a *Star Wars* Ville anytime soon...



Could Boba Fett receive his own movie – or will the films discount the Expanded Universe and keep him dead?

➤ and introduce us to a lot of new characters." It's true that when you look at *Avengers Assemble* and the solo predecessors and spin-offs, romance is pushed to the sidelines. Captain America only went as far as flirtatious banter and Thor seemed to only see Jane on weekends, while the rest of the running time was occupied by titanic clashes between gods and America blowing the Nazis to smithereens.

If we can learn anything from Disney's approach to Pixar and Marvel, it's that they will treat Lucasfilm like the separate entity it has always been. That's why Kathleen Kennedy (producer of *Jurassic Park* and *Back To The Future*) was made Lucas' successor as president of the studio. "A lot of people fear that *Star Wars* will be Disneyfied and you'll see Mickey Mouse and other characters running through, but Lucasfilm is its own studio within the umbrella of the Disney Corporation," says Bock. "To stay true to what *Star Wars* is and what it was before the last three films, I think they'll do a good job in churning out content, and that's what fans want most of all; they want more films." Kennedy has revealed that they intend to release "two or three films a year," so it seems like they're adopting the Marvel method already, rolling out a series of standalone adventures after the epic team-up that will be the new trilogy.

"I think once they get this first trilogy out they will branch out and follow certain characters," Bock continues. "Fans obviously want a Boba Fett movie, and maybe a film set entirely in the Wookiee world. We've seen glimpses of these places, but they certainly could warrant a film outright, I think we will see those one-offs in the future. Lucasfilm went a long way in developing their own TV series, and they had hundreds of scripts written that would satisfy these smaller characters. Those are all part of the package deal, and any one of them could be turned into its own movie. From what I've heard, they will be continuing along the TV path, not right away, but that's something Disney will explore further, and maybe they will launch their own *Star Wars* channel."

"The opportunities are greater now Disney owns the product over [George] Lucas. I wouldn't say he's been picky... but as far as making films he's been very slow about it." 16 years flew by between the ending and beginning of the two film trilogies, upon which fans' patience was 'rewarded' with Jar Jar Binks, so the acquisition could be the best thing that's happened since '77.

Since the news broke, there's been talk of the original cast returning to play older versions of Han Solo (Harrison Ford), Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) and Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher). "That's what people

2021

Jedi returns in a big way in the 2021 UK Census, filling newspapers with non-stories for weeks. The Archbishop of Canterbury makes an ill-judged play for headlines by praising Obi-Wan Kenobi in his Christmas sermon, and is mocked out of office.

2022

The Disneyland Parks each have their own version of Tomorrowland – a futuristic themed area that is under the constant threat of becoming Yesterdayland due to scientific advancements. Not anymore they don't! They've all been renamed 'Star Wars Land', and the queues are horrific.

2023

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of *Return Of The Jedi*, Sebastian Shaw is re-inserted in place of Hayden Christensen for the closing Force ghost scene to the delight of everyone – apart from Christensen, who is currently starring in *Two And A Half Men* alongside Jon Cryer, having replaced Ashton Kutcher's successor, *Prometheus*' Logan Marshall-Green.



Original stars Carrie Fisher and Mark Hamill have both expressed an interest in returning.

"FANS OBVIOUSLY WANT A BOBA FETT MOVIE AND MAYBE A FILM SET ENTIRELY IN THE WOOKIEE WORLD"

JEFF BOCK

really want to see," he says. "Prequels are interesting to a degree, but you really want to continue the story, and I think that Lucas had in his mind that he was going to do the story and no one could stop him, but what the fans want to see is what happened to these characters that they really love, like Luke and Han and Chewie."

In the saga's on-screen chronology, Episode VII will sit after Darth Vader's death in *Return Of The Jedi*. The question of what happens next is one that Lucas struggled to answer, despite the books detailing Han Solo and Princess Leia's marriage, children and subsequent grandchild. Speaking with the *LA Times* in 2008, Lucas said, "I get asked all the time, 'What happens after *Return Of The Jedi*?' and there really is no answer for that. The movies were the story of Anakin Skywalker and Luke Skywalker, and when

Luke saves the galaxy and redeems his father, that's where that story ends." He admitted that the saga's possible future documented in books, videogames and comics were "incredibly creative," but that he was just the person who built the sandbox they're playing in. It has been said that he will serve as a consultant to Disney, but his position will be much the same as it is now: allowing newcomers to play with his toys.

The returning cast aside, it's likely that the new films will feature fresh faces, just as the original *Star Wars* did when Harrison Ford was yet to become a world-famous, whip-cracking architect-turned-explorer. Bock thinks they'll need to host a mini British invasion, too, as Lucas always did. "Having a well-respected English performer like Alec Guinness or someone is always good to throw in the mix; someone who can really act," he says. "Lucas was a genius in that respect, casting someone like that as Obi-Wan Kenobi just to give it legitimacy, and he did that with Ewan McGregor and Liam Neeson, too. So I think established actors will play supporting characters, and if they do introduce Han and Leia's kids then we'll probably see new faces for those roles. You want to discover someone fresh so you're not associating them with anyone else or any other roles they've played." As Peter Jackson has proved with his controversial casting of relative unknowns and BBC

THE FUTURE OF
**STAR
WARS**



TOYS ARE COLLECTABLES AT STAKE?



Toys have always orbited the *Star Wars* universe, and the vintage figures are rare and highly collectable. Now that Disney has taken the reins, that can only mean one thing: loads more merchandise, so will that affect collectors? Brian Stillman, executive producer of Plastic Galaxy, thinks not. "Collectors who focus on vintage toys – like myself – don't seem to care one way or the other," he says of the new acquisition. "New toys, whether produced by Hasbro, Disney, Gentle Giant or any of the other modern licensees, don't really impact the vintage market; those toys are simply outside our frame of reference."

But could we be facing a future where Disney's *Star Wars* toys join the coveted ranks of Kenner, commanding vast sums for once mass-produced material? "Part of the vintage toys' collectability comes from rarity and nostalgia," says Stillman. "You're faced with two questions: will people hoard these new toys? If they do, there will be just as many lying around in 30 years as there are today. And will anyone have any nostalgia for these toys in 30 years? Because if not, even if only two of them survive, no one's going to care enough to hunt them down."



2024

The saga hits the headlines for the wrong reasons when a man in Illinois is arrested for accidentally burning down his tower block after constructing an indoor funeral pyre for his collection of *Star Wars* books rendered worthless by the spate of new releases.

2025

'Star Wars World' officially opens in California next to the site of Skywalker Ranch, which is now preserved as a museum, as well as a homage to the *Star Wars* saga and the career of George Lucas.

2026

A Boba Fett solo movie is released in cinemas, with *Dredd*'s Karl Urban under the mask. He has been forgiven by JJ Abrams for giving away the identity of the villain in *Star Trek Into Darkness*, and is welcomed back into Hollywood.

2027

Plans for a sequel to the Boba Fett movie are scrapped after the first attracted audiences consisting solely of readers of the Expanded Universe books. Karl Urban leaves Hollywood, never to return.



BOOKS

IS THE EXPANDED UNIVERSE DUE A REBOOT?



Those who have invested in the Byzantine plot developments and yo-yoing quality of the *Star Wars* Expanded Universe have more to fear than your average fan – especially with the obvious news that Episode VII wouldn't be based on Timothy Zahn's 'Thrawn trilogy' of tie-in novels that kicked the whole canon off, picking up after *Return Of The Jedi*. There's now a huge, looming post-*ROTJ* saga ready to unfold on screen, and much of the EU could find itself being de-canonised.

Del Rey, the long-running science fiction and fantasy publisher, now part of Penguin/Random House, has had the license since releasing *Star Wars: From the Adventures Of Luke Skywalker* in November 1976, which is pretty impressive stuff. Last renewed in 2008, Del Rey's *Star Wars* license expires in 2013 – a fact that must have sent blood running cold in the Del Rey offices when the new trilogy was released.

It's hard to see Disney really having that much of an issue with the Expanded Universe so long as it all falls in line – and they've had bouts of book burning before when *Attack Of The Clones* gave us a bit of Boba Fett's back story, and the time Zahn took a wild stab at filling out the then mythical Clone Wars in *Heir To The Empire*, but this will be on a whole new scale, and not necessarily because of the House Of Mouse. In all likelihood, the fans will continue policing canon and flagging up inconsistencies, albeit with more hand-wringing over which source is superior than was the case with George Lucas at the helm. Meanwhile, Disney's new regime will probably alternate between ignoring the books and cherry-picking good ideas from the books... well, how is that different to what Lucasfilm already does?



Who will be the next big bad in Darth Vader's absence?

➤ talent in *The Hobbit*, if the property is recognisable enough, you don't need big names. Karie Bible agrees that it's not a hinge for success. "Star power doesn't matter; if you look at Andrew Garfield as Spider-Man, his only high-profile film role was a supporting one in *The Social Network*. In the case of many franchise films the story is the draw for audiences."

At the time of writing, only the screenwriter for Episode VII has been announced. Michael Arndt is taking the formidable weight of fan expectations on his shoulders, but he comes with enough Hollywood cred to give our box office analysts faith in the forthcoming picture. Bible continues, "Arndt is a wonderfully talented writer who won an Oscar for *Little Miss Sunshine*. He also got an Oscar nomination for writing *Toy Story 3*, which received rave reviews. He has a great imagination, so it will be fascinating to see what he brings to the series." The writer is in demand right now, having penned the sequel to the hugely anticipated *Hunger Games* sequel, *Catching Fire*, and he's even worked out the secret as to what made the original *Star Wars* trilogy an instant classic. Delivering a lecture on storytelling at Austin Film Festival in 2010, he used *Star Wars* as an example of how to do it right. He was reported as saying that if a writer could tie up the story's arcs immediately after the 'moment of despair' at the climax, then he or she could serve up the 'insanely great ending', leaving the audience feeling euphoric. Lucas, he said, hit those marks at the end of *Star Wars* within 22 seconds.

However, the main component is still waiting to be locked down: the director. Many household names have been bandied about, such as Steven Spielberg and JJ Abrams, but the pair have ruled themselves out of the equation in the press. The latter attempted to break down his reaction for *Entertainment Weekly*: "Part of me? Thrilled. Part of me? Terrified. Most of me? Thrillified." Bible's money is on Brad Bird, the third name that's being churned through the rumour mill. "He won two Oscars for directing the Pixar animated films *The Incredibles* and *Ratatouille*," she points out. "His live action debut was *Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol*, which was a huge hit at the box office. Given his relationship with Disney and his track record, he would be an obvious choice."

Whoever winds up with the gig, Bock believes that one thing they will need is a big black hole in their diary. "Obviously, this is a huge undertaking," he says. "It will probably be shot in 3D, and that's a big time commitment, too, especially if they hire a director to do all three movies. I think that that's probably a vital component that is yet to be released. The director can add quite a bit to a film like this, so it will be interesting to see what angle they choose to go for. A director that has some established credits behind him – or her – is key, but it depends whether they want to go for someone who is really good at getting emotional performances out of people. George Lucas never really was that kind of director; he was really nourished in the technical aspects, so they need someone who can handle both the tactician nature of 3D, big budget filmmaking, yet be sensitive to the organic performances that the actors need to have, even though they're acting in front of green screen most of the time."

Of course, the budget is likely to be colossal, and the movies are bound to take advantage of IMAX and 3D innovations that both drive up ticket prices and enhance the viewing experience. Unlike *John Carter*, however, Disney can afford to dig deep, knowing the returns will be lucrative. "I think they can spend anywhere from \$200 to \$300 million on the first film knowing that they're making a trilogy," says Bock. "It's not going to be an issue making that money back; the first one will easily make a billion globally, and maybe then some. If it's incredible, then it could upend *Avatar* as the highest grossing picture of all time. That's what it comes down to: this is a built-in billion-dollar franchise, even if the films completely suck. If they're good – like I imagine they will be after seeing who they've hired as a screenwriter – I really do think we're talking *Avengers*-sized grossing and more."

Incidentally, Episode VII will be out in cinemas the same year that *Avengers 2* is released, and there may even be a Justice League movie from Warner Bros in that same year. The big brands on the block will be

"NOW THEY OWN THE BRAND, DISNEY CAN REALLY MERCHANDISE THIS TO THE LIMIT" JEFF BOCK

2028

In recognition of the earlier census results, the first Jedi Temple is officially opened by Warwick Davis in Southampton, UK, constructed partially from unsold copies of the recently re-released *Holiday Special* and *Caravan Of Courage* collected box sets on the site of an old church.

2029

To celebrate 30 years of *The Phantom Menace*, a new special edition of the prequel trilogy is released. The changes for the Blu-ray, which include Jango Fett watching the Naboo parade with a young Boba in a pushchair and replacing Yaddle with a Gungan Jedi master in the Council scenes, are predictably met with outrage from fans.

2030

The 'Star Wars World' theme park brand expands globally, with new parks being opened in Dubai, Frankfurt, Guangzhou and Sao Paulo. At the Dubai launch, plans for Episodes X-XII are announced by a hologram of Alec Guinness as Obi-Wan Kenobi, projected onto the stage by rapper Dr Dre.

TV SHOWS

THEY FINALLY GOT GOOD, BUT ARE THEY AT RISK?



After a bunch of ropey non-starters – the inexplicably daft *Holiday Special* and the twee *Droids* and *Ewoks* cartoons – right now the saga's TV fortunes are looking pretty good. *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* is entering its fifth season; Lucasfilm's own answer to endless *Family Guy* specials, *Star Wars: Detours*, is just around the corner, and every fresh chunk of hyperbole about the long-mooted live-action *Star Wars: Underworld* is more thrilling than the last.

As Cartoon Network (owned by Time Warner) renews its contract with Lucasfilm on a season-by-season basis, we can probably expect *The Clone Wars*: Season Five to be the last on the channel, and Season Six to air on Disney XD as soon as

late 2013 alongside *Ultimate Spider-Man* and *Tron: Uprising* – and presumably Seth Green's CGI sketch show *Detours* will follow suit. Supervising Director Dave Filoni has hinted that Season Six may be the last, and it's certainly moving closer to the fixed end point that is *Revenge Of The Sith* and Anakin Skywalker's destiny.

A brand new show would be a good way to break with the previous era (and the embarrassment of Warner Home Video releasing earlier seasons on DVD), as well as move the focus from the Episode II-III timeframe and into a more contemporary one – or at least one more closely linked to the impending Episode VII through characters and settings. That's also where *Star Wars: Underworld* could come in – the

pre-Episode VI *Deadwood*-in-space retooled for a later period in *Star Wars* history. It didn't take Marvel long to get Joss Whedon's *SHIELD* pilot out of the starting blocks, so perhaps *Underworld* is already being debated in boardrooms at ABC and casting wishlists being passed up and down the table. The difference between the approach to both shows at Lucasfilm and both shows at Disney is that money is less of a limitation – provided the return is promising, obviously – and the traditional sacred cows may no longer be respected; the early years of Yoda could be sketched in, Leia's upbringing on Alderaan revealed, Obi-Wan's life on Tatooine explored and even moves as shameless as bringing Darth Vader or Palpatine back from the dead could all unfold on one of Disney's networks.



at play, but Disney's acquisition of Lucasfilm means no studio can touch the corporation now. Instead of being worried, perhaps we should be excited at the prospect of the galactic amount of *Star Wars* content coming our way. "Disney has synergy like no other company in Hollywood," says Karie Bible. "They have the ability to build theme park attractions and sell toys

like no one else. Their brand and marketing power is without equal. Some insiders are saying that the retail possibilities were what made the deal so attractive." Bock agrees that the deal makes good sense for Walt and the fans. "No other studio has the marketing muscle of the Mouse House. Plus, they've already had a working relationship with George Lucas with the Disneyland attraction 'Star Tours', as well as myriad cross-promotional merchandise, most of which has, until now, been available exclusively at Disneyland stores. I just hope that at some point they turn Tomorrowland into *Star Wars* Land, because I'm sure that's what people want. And now they do own the brand they can really merchandise this to the limit."

It certainly ensures the brand's legacy for generations to come, giving the children of the iGeneration a chance to see a *Star Wars* film in the cinema for the first time. The master of that universe certainly feels that the Force is strong once again. It started with George Lucas, and it's continuing on his terms, so we'll leave the last lines to him: "It's now time for me to pass *Star Wars* on to a new generation of filmmakers. I've always believed that *Star Wars* could live beyond me, and I thought it was important to set up the transition during my lifetime. I'm confident that with Lucasfilm under the leadership of Kathleen Kennedy, and having a new home within the Disney organisation, *Star Wars* will certainly live on and flourish for many generations to come."



Star Wars: The Complete Saga is available to own on Blu-ray now.



Will there be a new torch holder to carry the Skywalker saga?



COMICS

UNCLEAR, THE FATE OF LONG-TERM LICENSEES DARK HORSE IS



There's a precedent here: when Disney bought Marvel, the various Disney and Pixar titles being churned out by indie publisher Boom! Studios were ported across to Marvel as soon as the license elapsed. Marvel published *Star Wars* comics from 1977 to 1986, but it's Dark Horse Comics who have really pushed the storytelling in bold new directions, and have perhaps the most to lose. Dark Horse boss Mike Richardson released a fire-fighting statement designed to cut off speculation, but it opened up the way for far more questions than it answered, saying, "*Star Wars* will be with us for the near future."

"WILL THEY GIVE THE CREATIVE PEOPLE FREE REIGN TO FOLLOW THEIR IMAGINATIONS?" TOM VEITCH

Obviously, this deal changes the landscape, so we'll all have to see what it means for the future.

"I can't visualise Marvel doing the diverse *Star Wars* titles that Dark Horse has," muses Tom Veitch, who wrote the *Dark Empire* trilogy for Dark Horse in 1991, regarded by many as the closest thing we have ever got to a true post-*Return Of The Jedi* trilogy, as well as the epic, swashbuckling *Tales Of The Jedi* that directly influenced *Knights Of The Old Republic*.

"My guess – and this is a wild one – is that Mike Richardson will sell Dark Horse to Disney. How's that for an answer? Disney has already said they will do spin-off films, television shows and so forth. It's a deep mythology with tons of possibilities. I guess the real question is will they give the creative people free reign to follow their imaginations – imaginations steeped in *Star Wars*, and who will oversee all these new wonders? Does Kathleen Kennedy have *Star Wars* in her blood?"

R2-D-TOY

More than 2,500 Star Wars action figures in one book



Fans can finally trace the evolution of each *Star Wars* character in toy form with *The Ultimate Action Figure Collection*. It's the definitive source, with over 2,500 action figures produced over the past 35 years, from Kenner to Hasbro. Compiled by Stephen J Sansweet, owner of the world's largest private collection of *Star Wars* memorabilia, the book also features rare and coveted merchandise and figures from the films, videogames and TV series. The

characters are listed alphabetically by their name, rank and date of release and come with photos, facts and commentary – it's a collector's bible.

Star Wars: The Ultimate Action Figure Collection is out now, published by Titan Books for £24.99.



Cad Bane

The Clone Wars' bounty hunter is one of the newer figures in the collection.



C-3PO Phantom Menace



Emperor Palpatine



The Chiss general is one of the few characters from the books here.

Grand Admiral Thrawn



Grand Moff Tarkin



Jar Jar Binks



Baron Papanoida



Queen Amidala



The Max Rebo Band member is immortalised here.

Barquin D'An



Ben Kenobi



Princess Leia Boushh



Bib Fortuna



Bossk Original



For all its rigidity, this likeness of the Sith lord and fallen Jedi is spot on.

Darth Vader Original



Lando Calrissian

Nope, we don't know why he has a snake draped over him either...

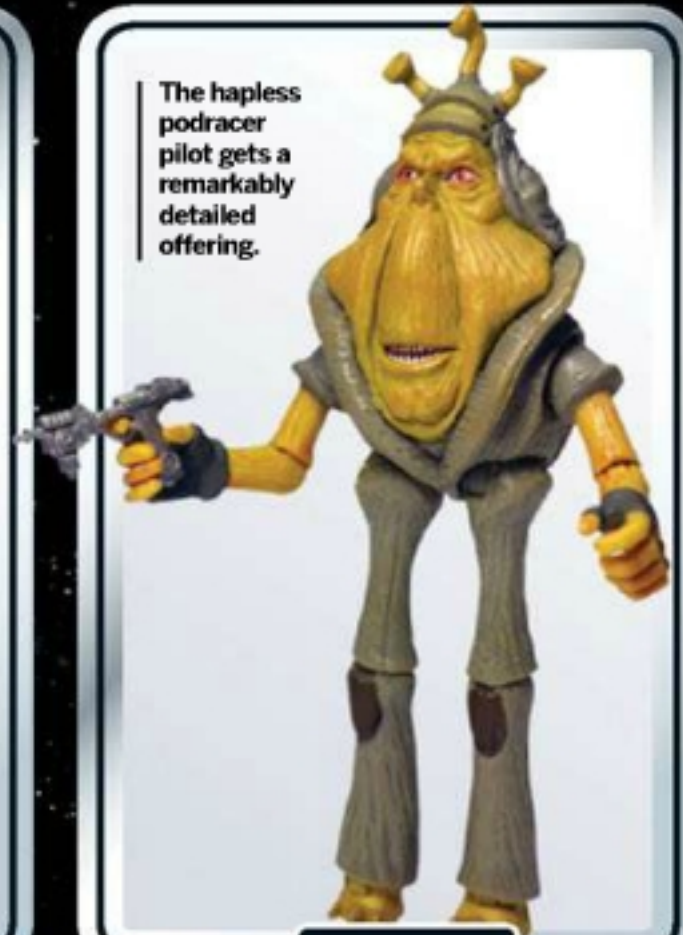


Yoda



This young Obi-Wan arguably looks more like Qui-Gon Jinn.

Obi-Wan Kenobi



The hapless podracer pilot gets a remarkably detailed offering.

Ben Quadinaros



Luke Skywalker Bacta Tank

Part of the Ewoks' appeal was to sell toys, and this figure has remained collectable.



Wicket Warrick



Anakin Battle Damage



Prune Face

THE OTHER MARVEL[®] MOVIES

Fox's superhero overseer Mark Millar on *The Wolverine*, X-Men and beyond

COMIC-BOOK
LEGEND AND 20TH
CENTURY FOX'S
NEW CREATIVE
CONSULTANT
TALKS X-MEN:
DAYS OF FUTURE
PAST, THE
WOLVERINE,
FANTASTIC FOUR,
THE DAREDEVIL
MOVIE YOU'LL
NEVER SEE
AND WHY A BIG
SCREEN JUSTICE
LEAGUE JUST
WON'T WORK...

WORDS JAMES HOARE

As one of the people responsible for not only some of the 21st Century's most successful comic-books, but for also directly and indirectly inspiring the current phase of Marvel movies, it's only fitting that *Kick-Ass* creator Mark Millar has been called upon to lend his canny grasp of superpowered mayhem to 20th Century Fox's disparate collection of Marvel properties, serving as Creative Consultant on the *X-Men* prequel series under director Bryan Singer and producer Matthew Vaughn, the *Fantastic Four* reboot by *Chronicle's* Josh Trank and James Mangold's low-key, far more credible use of the fan-favourite mutant antihero in *The Wolverine*. And that's just the beginning.



"I love the idea of all the Marvel characters spread across a bunch of different studios in a giant, cohesive Marvel universe," enthuses Millar.

"When I was a kid picking up comics, the editorial group used to run their own little fief; the *X-Men* books were all under one editor, the *Spider-Man* books under another, the *Avengers* books under another editor, and that's what this feels like, too. The financial burden to have all these things at one company would just be too great – you'd never get a *Guardians Of The Galaxy* if Marvel could put out a *Fantastic Four* movie, you know?"

"A lot of people say 'I want it all back at Marvel,'" he adds, "but there'd be half as many movies out there."

Is it difficult to make the Fox Marvel movies line up because they're all in different stages of development?

Fantastic Four and *X-Men: Days Of Future Past* are still in the script stage, and *The Wolverine* – when I got this job they'd been shooting [for] a couple of weeks, but the screenplay for *The Wolverine* is really, really terrific – I'm really, really delighted with it. Obviously, the casting's all really good and the director [James Mangold] is brilliant. So the fact it's Mangold, Josh Trank and Matthew Vaughn (now Bryan Singer), I feel this initial line-up of movies is terrific, and the idea will be to look at a plan. I can't go into any specifics on it yet, but the idea will be to work on a plan for the next two to three years. Beyond that, I think we know more, but I've got some

cool stuff in mind, and Fox are very happy. We're talking to other directors about future projects [and] other writers about future projects, so it's very, very exciting – I feel like Doctor Doom behind this new league of evil.

Were you concerned about *The Wolverine* moving away from the mainline X-Men movies, or do you think it's to its strength that it's able to stand alone?

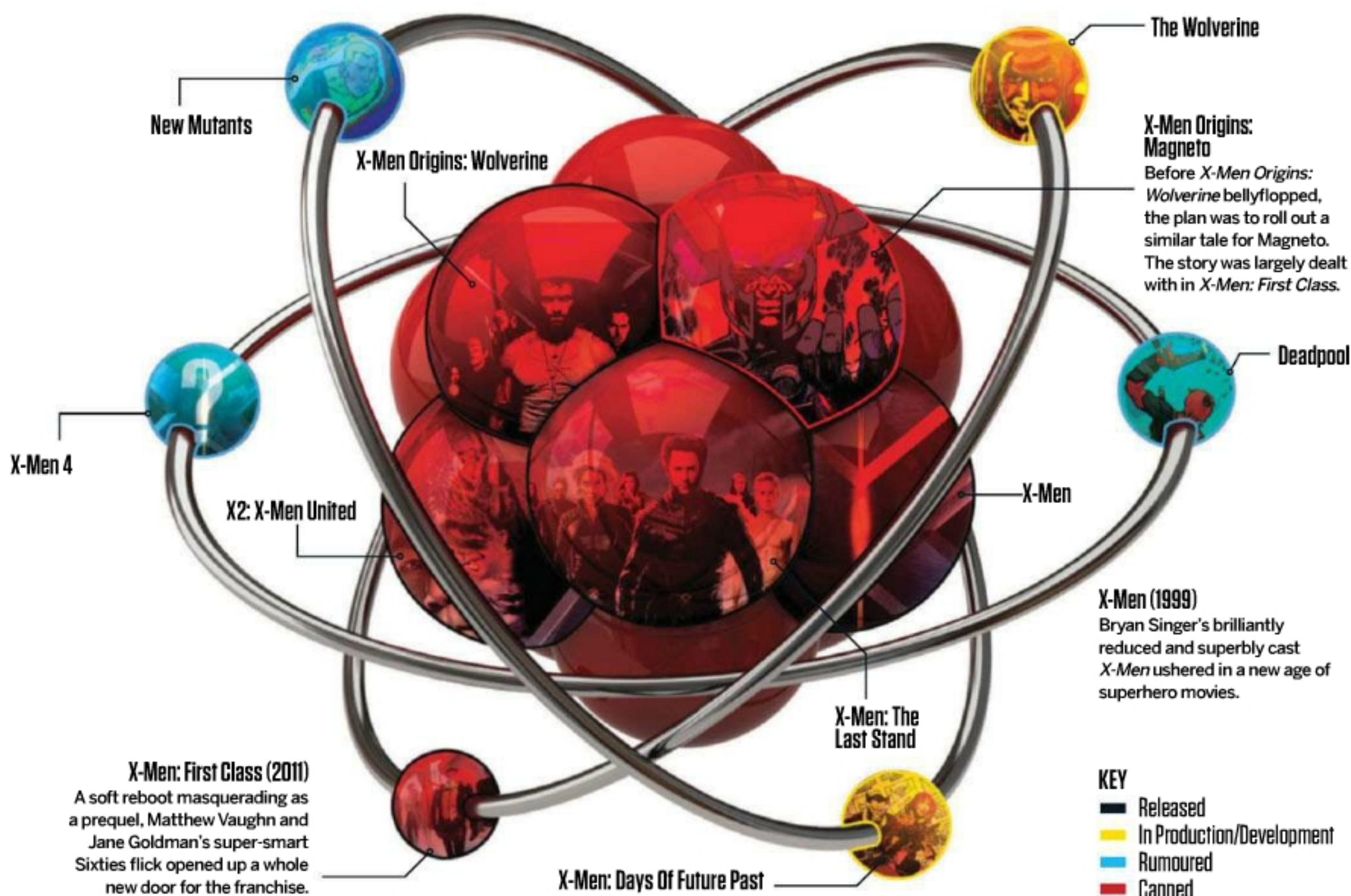
Oh, absolutely, I've no worries about it at all. You know, I wrote the *Wolverine* comic twice – I did the *Old Man Logan* story and *Wolverine: Enemy Of The State* – and I don't think having individual Wolverine adventures detracts from the X-Men. He's like a lone wolf character; he disappears and does his own thing sometimes, and then he comes back and hangs out at the mansion, so it does feel quite natural for him to be in these movies. You don't want to have him out there all the time, because I think if you've got him in X-Men and Wolverine movies and they're all running at the same time, it's a little bit too much, but as long as you're smart with it [it's fine], and there's other characters to explore as well. The X-Men universe is about the same size as the Marvel universe in terms of the number of titles it sustains at any one time, so there's a ton of stuff to play with and a lot of characters I'd like to explore.

Do you think the more characters you throw into an X-Men movie, the more dense and uninviting it becomes? ➤



CHILDREN OF THE ATOM

BRYAN SINGER'S X-MEN UNIVERSE IS AT THE HEART OF FOX'S MARVEL EMPIRE. HERE'S THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY...



UNCANNY COMING ATTRACTIONS

THE FORTHCOMING (AND POSSIBLY NEVER COMING) MUTANT MOVIES AT A GLANCE

THE WOLVERINE

Release Date: 26 July 2013
Director: James Mangold
Cast: Hugh Jackman, Hiroyuki Sanada, Hal Yamanouchi

Based on the celebrated Chris Claremont and Frank Miller miniseries, *The Wolverine* is a sequel to the original crop of movies that sees Logan head to Japan to escape his demons... and meet new ones. It is a noir-influenced take that promises romance, the Yakuza, Samurai ethics and an end to the over-powered silliness of *Origins*.

X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST

Release Date: 18 July 2014
Director: Bryan Singer
Cast: James McAvoy, Michael Fassbender, Jennifer Lawrence

Based on the comic-book story arc by Chris Claremont and John Byrne, *Days Of Future Past* is rumoured to set the story against the Vietnam-era peace movement, as the X-Men must save one of their most reviled foes to prevent a darker future. Original *X-Men* cast members Patrick Stewart and Ian McKellen will both appear.

DEADPOOL

Release Date: Est 2015 **Director:** Tim Miller **Cast:** Ryan Reynolds

The Weapon X Project's other lethal immortal, Deadpool inherited all of Wolverine's healing powers and bad luck, but none of the angst. Comic creator Rob Liefeld recently revealed, "If the *Deadpool* test footage was leaked, the internet would freak and riots would ensue." VFX guy turned director Tim Miller is working from a script by *Zombieland*'s Rhett Reese and Paul Wernick.

X-MEN 4

Release Date: Est 2016 **Director:** Bryan Singer (unconfirmed) **Cast:** TBC

Bryan Singer was originally slated to work on a sequel to *X-Men: The Last Stand*, which according to producer Lauren Shuler Donner, will "lead into *X-Men 5*". Rumour was that Singer was gearing up to an adaptation of the *Days Of Future Past* storyline, but now that's in the prequel sequel – with the director – who knows what's in store?

NEW MUTANTS

Release Date: Est 2016 **Director:** TBC **Cast:** TBC

Teased by 20th Century Fox CEO Tom Rothman in April 2012, a teen spin-off would solve the problem of too many supporting characters by having the younger bunch in their own flick. It's a realistic proposition given the success of *Chronicle*, but there's little to go on other than one cryptic "yes" from Rothman to a rather long and rambling question, so don't get too excited, X-Babies.

It can be. I remember when I was writing *Ultimate X-Men* and people were saying "I want to see Gambit, I want to see Rogue..." Everybody has a list, and at first you think "I'm going to please everyone", then you realise you're pleasing no one with ten-second cameos. I think that was the major problem with that first Wolverine movie [*X-Men Origins: Wolverine*] and *X-Men 3*. Bryan Singer did such an incredible job with the original movie – it's quite like *Star Wars* in that there's Episodes IV, V and VI, and we've got the Matthew Vaughn prequels, and I love that. If we are bringing in a character then it shouldn't just be for a trailer or to get a picture online and get people excited; it should have a point in the story.

Are there any X-Men characters that you think deserve some screen time?

I do, but the minute I say them it'll become a news story! All the ones that I thought of we're going to do. I think there's two or three that are under utilised, and we do have plans – not necessarily immediately, but two or three years down the line.

Are you excited to have Bryan Singer back for *X-Men: Days Of Future Past*?

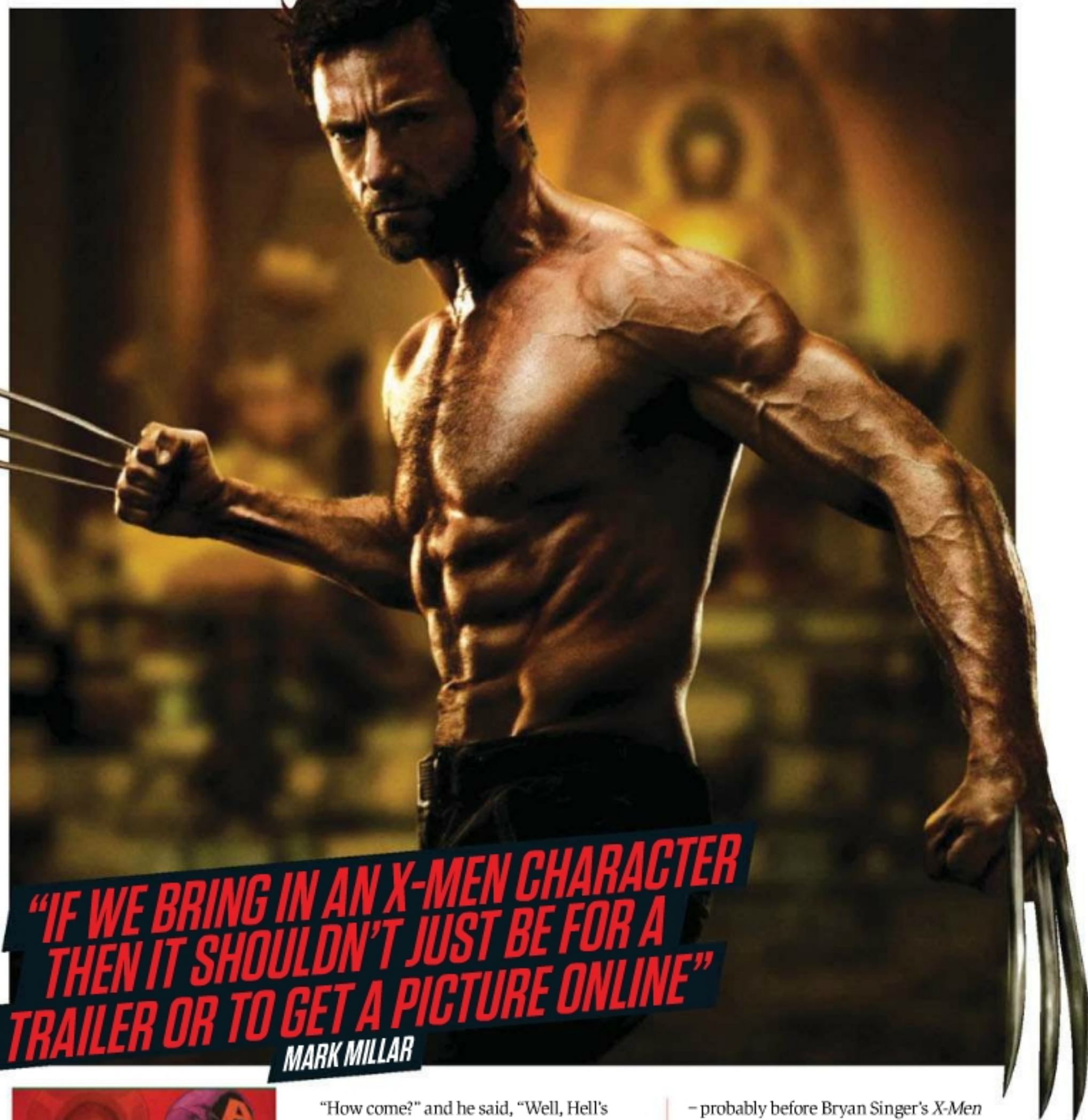
It's incredibly exciting. The first *X-Men* really launched the wave of superhero movies we've been loving for the past decade after some horrific stuff in the Nineties, so having him back in the world he started feels right. *X2*, I think, is one of the greatest superhero movies ever made. The idea of this guy being back in the fold and planning something as ambitious as this picture can only be good news.

Were you involved in the *Daredevil* movie at any point, or had that already shut down by the time you came on board?

I came in that week – I know there was talk of it. The original idea was so great, and unfortunately there was 11 months to get it out there before the rights reverted to Marvel Studios, which is a real shame. I have no idea what the plan is with Disney Marvel, but with Fox Marvel the plan was so cool – I hope they do *Daredevil* justice, because I love the character.

Were you into Joe Carnahan's take on *Daredevil*?

Oh genius, this was going to be a cross between *Serpico* and Frank Miller. The thing that Joe pointed out that was so smart – he spoke to me before he started working on it – he said, "I've got an idea for *Daredevil*," and I said "What is it?" He had an act in mind, and said, "We can't set it in the present day," and I said



Mark Millar's work on *The Ultimates* inspired the recent *Avengers Assemble*.



"How come?" and he said, "Well, Hell's Kitchen is a beautiful neighbourhood." I'd never thought of it that way – Rudy Giuliani [former mayor of New York] has cleaned everything up. It's nice for the people who live there, but it's not very good cinematically. So he said it has to be a period piece, and the perfect time to set it would be the Seventies, as you have all the kung-fu exploitation, the race riots, the blackout – all that kind of stuff would be so cool in superhero movie. The blackout with a guy that's blind would be incredible.

Do you think the way people approach superhero movies has changed? *Green Lantern* felt very Nineties in that it was a straight origin story...

I think there's two points there, and *Green Lantern*'s a great example because these movies used to be made by guys who didn't read the stuff growing up, and before

– probably before Bryan Singer's *X-Men* – generally those superhero movies were done by journeyman directors. There was the occasional great director like Richard Donner or Tim Burton, but generally it was guys who you didn't really follow. I think it was interesting that *Green Lantern* was done by a guy who was a very good director [Martin Campbell], but wasn't a comic-book fan, so he approached it the way those directors did back in the Eighties and Nineties. Bryan Singer, Sam Raimi, all these guys are massively wedded to the source material – they grew up with it in a lot of the cases. Stan Lee and Steve Ditko's Spider-Man is very evident in Tobey Maguire and Sam Raimi's Spider-Man. The other thing that's happened as well is not only have the best directors come along – the guys most appropriate for it – but the audiences have matured with the superheroes. For example, *Kick-Ass* is a subversion of the



Could Wolverine re-appear in the X-Men film franchise?

superhero story, but you have to be familiar with the tropes to know you're breaking them. These movies we're doing and the comics we're doing right now would have been impossible for a mainstream audience in 2002, but now everybody knows who Galactus is and that Tony Stark is Iron Man. We're living in the world we always dreamed of, where suddenly everyone is superhero literate.

Now the movie paradigm has shifted to the Marvel Studios method, do you think DC and Warner Bros have a harder job to build a shared universe with *Man Of Steel* and a Justice League movie?

I think the big problem for them is the characters are just too out of date. The characters were created 75 years ago – even the newest major character was created 68 years ago. I adored the DC stuff growing up, but really, how do you do a movie about Green Lantern? His power is that he manifests green plasma from his imagination and uses them as weapons against someone. Even that in itself... if you just imagine watching a fight scene with a guy who's 100 feet away making plasma manifestations – it's not exactly raucous, getting up close and personal. The Flash has door handles on the side of his mask, and if he doesn't wear that mask I'll be pissed off, you know what I mean? They're

in a weird, weird situation – if you've got a guy who moves at the speed of light up against the Weather Wizard and Captain Cold or whatever, then your movie's over in two seconds. You can get away with stuff in comics that in live action's just a bit sucky – the best [example] is definitely Aquaman – Aquaman can't even talk underwater. If you think about it in comics, it's fine – you just have a speech balloon – but how do you have Atlantis and people talking underwater? Are they going to talk telepathically? Is it going to be body forms? The actual logistics of each member of the Justice League is disastrous; you put them all together and I think you get an excellent way of losing \$200 million.

Do you think the *Fantastic Four* have similar issues, because they are older characters that people sometimes struggle to relate to?

I actually think the characters themselves are quite easy to do – you can really relate to Johnny Storm, you can relate to Ben Grimm, Reed's the super-genius – every single one of them you can understand, and they seem a little more three dimensional. It's tricky, because we saw what happened to the Fox movie last time, but they've given it to a guy who's really terrific – Josh Trank, who did a great job on *Chronicle* – and the guy's who's writing the screenplay – I can't say his name because it's not been

made public – but I read the screenplay about three weeks ago, and it's absolutely brilliant. It's as good as I think you could do a *Fantastic Four* movie; I was so impressed with it. So it's in good hands – Fox are very clever in that what they do is tie in a bunch of good people and let them get on with it.

Josh Trank seems like a bit of an outsider choice. What do you think he'll bring to *Fantastic Four*?

He's making it work for the screen – he's a great storyteller. *Chronicle*, if you think about it, was similar to *Fantastic Four* in that it was a bunch of people who were transformed into something more than human – that turned out to be his calling card to come and do something like *Fantastic Four*. What I wasn't expecting was how funny and likeable he could make this, as well as getting the more awesome moments on screen – the Ridley Scott moments. The *Fantastic Four* really are jaw-dropping in the same way you feel when you saw *Alien* for the first time. There's some moments in this – not to be specific – that are going to be phenomenal on screen, and stuff you haven't seen in a superhero movie before. 2014's going to be a really interesting year for Fox Marvel. ☞

The Wolverine is in cinemas 26 July 2013. *Fantastic Four* and *X-Men: Days Of Future Past* are expected in 2014.



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Life Of Pi

Apart from the fact that it involves a boy shipwrecked alongside a tiger, what really sells Ang Lee's *Life Of Pi* is its unique and vivid visual imagination. **Special Effects Supervisor Bill Westenhofer explains how they animated a Bengal tiger, braved stormy seas and why their use of 3D isn't just another con...**

INTERVIEW STEPHEN KELLY

Establishing 3D as an art form

"The interesting thing about the opening montage is that every shot has a different 3D story to tell. There's the obvious, like a bird that comes out into the audience; then there's other stuff like a bear that stands up, and there's a painting in the background that the art department made that's a perspective painting – so the renaissance version of 3D existing in a modern 3D image. Every one of those has some sort of 3D 'gee-whiz' thing going on. We talked to a couple of different stereographers – especially one that did a lot of research at MIT – about what would be unique in a 3D experience. One of Ang's goals was to show that 3D can bring something to a drama. With the water in particular, the 3D helps you see the nuance and power of the waves. Overall, though, it's subtle. We're not trying to poke people in the eye."

Animating the tiger

"The biggest decision we had to make early on was how much real tiger we were going to use. Some suggested doing it all digital for consistency. Myself and Ang fought for the opposite; we wanted to use real tigers whenever we could. In the end we used around 14 per cent real tiger, but having real tigers in Taiwan for eight weeks gave us better references. When I worked on *The Chronicles Of Narnia*, for example, they gave us a day with a lion and hired a trainer especially, but you can only get so much in a day.

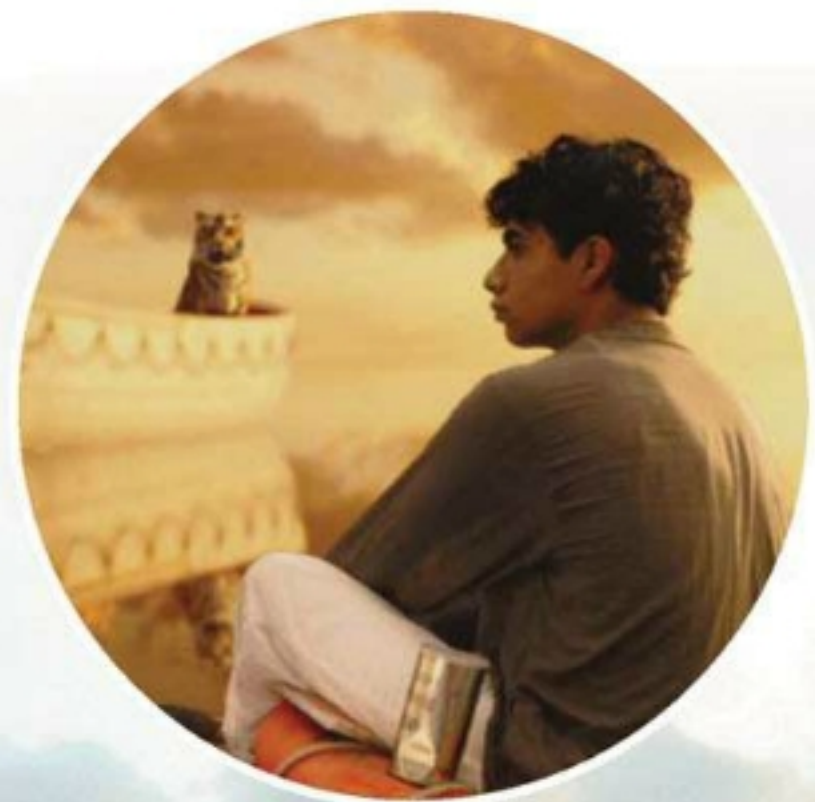
For eight weeks, we not only could do stuff like shoot him yawning, but got him on the actual lifeboat. What I've found over the years of doing animation is that it's very hard – even if you're trying hard not to do so – not to dramatise things. Because you know what the shot is supposed to be doing or what the story is meant to be telling it's tempting to, say, hold the gaze too long – the audience gets it, but you've lost the realistic animal quality.

I said to my team that we've done digital animals before – the lion in *Narnia*, cats and dogs and so on – and we try to make them as real as possible, but then they get up and dance and sing, and everyone knows they're fake. But this tiger was a tiger, and this was our best chance to fool our colleagues."



The chaotic sinking of Pi's ship

"This was a very tough sequence to do. We used a heavy fluid simulation for the water, which was hard as the water seems to just do what it likes, but we found a way to control it so we could have artistic control. The quality of the water and how it was moving was very important to Ang. For the ship itself, we built two different deck pieces. When he's on the ship that's all we have. The decks are moving around, there's wind and rain machines, but everything else is added – the ship is extended, the water and waves are added. It's a giant green screen stage worth \$80,000. We shot that on day two of production, and you never want to shoot something that technically challenging that early on! You want to wait for the crew to gel and everyone to know what's going on, but somehow we pulled it off."



The visual brief

"When we started the project and got back to Los Angeles after principal photography, Ang talked to the team and said: 'I want to create art with you.' There was a lot of opportunity for artistic expression. With the boat being in a tank against a green screen, we had such a blank slate in so many parts of the film. We would take stuff shot in a tank and manipulate it so that it would be framed like a painting. Ang said at the beginning that he wanted the water and sky to be as much of a character as the tiger. That meant we had to set the mood visually. It was a great opportunity for visual effects."



The sea and the sky as characters

"Ang is very research-orientated, so we did a ton of reference work. For the water we went out on a coast guard ship in a heavy storm overnight! For the water, we needed a lot of high-dynamic imagery, so we had to build up a repertoire of reference photos to use in the movie. It also involved watching a lot of episodes of *The Deadliest Catch*! In terms of skies, someone had the distinct pleasure – if you want to work in visual effects you have to get this gig – of taking our camera to Florida, sitting on a beach for three weeks and, whenever there was a cool cloud-scape floating by, taking a photo. We ended up with a library of around 150 skies. Whenever Ang started talking about a shot we could go back to that – which is important because Ang knows what he wants, but his communications are usually things like 'I want the sky to be melancholy.' It can require us to make interpretations. If he wants a melancholy sky, I can go through our cloud file and pull something out."



Life Of Pi is in cinemas now.



RED STATE

DOES TEXAS CHAINSAW 3D HAVE ANYTHING LEFT TO TELL US ABOUT AMERICA?

WORDS CALUM WADDELL

So why is it that, usually fruitlessly, horror filmmakers return again and again to classic creepers of the Sixties and Seventies for inspiration? Of course, the name value of such shockers as *Dawn Of The Dead*, *Halloween* and *The Last House On The Left* plays a major part in this – but that barely explains the reasoning behind rehashes of relative obscurities like *The Crazies*, *It's Alive*, *Mother's Day* and *Two Thousand Maniacs!*.

Ultimately, the answer is probably that the ideas back then were a lot fresher, considerably creepier and, more to the point, indicated a savvy social and political relevance. You see, during the era of the civil rights movement, Watergate and the Vietnam War, America was split – and as the recent Presidential election has proven, not a great deal has changed. There appears to be a substantial gulf in the issues given priority by the blue states (Democrat) and the red states (Republican). Arguably, no film franchise has done more to exaggerate and extrapolate this divide than *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*.

Think about it: Tobe Hooper's original 1974 outing highlights a bunch of free-wheeling hippy kids, straight out of liberal Austin (the 'blue' part of the Lone Star State), who stumble into a living nightmare thanks to some especially regressive redneck flesh-farmers that do not appreciate visitors – even the title evokes images of the Alamo. Indeed, it would surely be impossible to have the words 'Texas' and 'Massacre' together without mediating an especially brutal and emotionally charged local history.

Unfortunately, other than Hooper's Reagan-era sequel to his hit property, released to redundant box office in 1986 but later becoming feted as a cult classic, the *Chainsaw* series has largely disposed of anything approaching 'modern thought'. Not that the *Leatherface* legacy is alone in

NOT A REBOOT, BUT
A DIRECT SEQUEL TO
THE 1978 CLASSIC,
BUT WHILE TOBE
HOOPER'S THE TEXAS
CHAIN SAW MASSACRE
REFLECTED THE
URBAN LIBERAL/RURAL
CONSERVATIVE DIVIDE
IN AMERICAN SOCIETY,
DOES THIS NEW
TAKE ON THE
FRANCHISE TELL US
ANYTHING NEW ABOUT
AMERICA? WE FIND
OUT FROM DIRECTOR
JOHN LUSSENHOP...



Nearly 40 years after the original, and *Leatherface* is apparently still rocking the skin mask.

this – the remakes of *The Crazies*, *Dawn Of The Dead*, *The Last House On The Left* and various others opted for a more po-faced approach to the on screen splatter theatrics: more interested in illustrating spurting arteries than reflecting upon (respectively) military incompetence, consumerism and class division.

So it was, then, that the Hooper-less *Leatherface: The Texas Chainsaw Massacre III* (1990) and the fourth instalment, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Next Generation* (1994) slinked out with scant notice – brainless and shameless shockers which paled in comparison to the first two features. In 2003, Michael Bay tried to pour some fresh petrol into the saw with his hotly hyped redo. While it was surprisingly slick and sanguine-filled, its attempts to mimic the raw energy and retrograde Seventies setting of Hooper's groundbreaking blood-blockbuster once again lacked any context or commentary. The less said about 2006's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning*, the better.

SO IT IS, THEN, THAT FOR BETTER OR WORSE WE FIND OURSELVES WITH

Texas Chainsaw 3D (the 'massacre' part of the title has been, perhaps tellingly, dropped). That said, with a United States which is almost as polarised today as it was in the exploitation heyday of the early Seventies, maybe this will be the 'thinking man's sequel' – both scary and smart – that true terror junkies have been hoping for.

"Ah... actually, I can tell you that I avoid politics entirely in movies," begins *Texas Chainsaw 3D* director John Luessenhop, immediately squashing any hope that horror cinema might once again mix arteries with allegories. "I mean, I did try and separate the two worlds – the rural and the urban. We see the young characters coming from the city to the back roads ➤"

A ROAD TRIP THROUGH THE RIGHT/LEFT DIVIDE IN AMERICA'S HORROR HEARTLAND

HOME OF THE GRAVE



Texas [1] may have been established by Tobe Hooper as horror's number one slasher-spot, but there are plenty of other American states which splatter-cinema has advocated avoiding. Take *Deliverance* (1972), one of the chief innovators of backwoods-terror. In this classic it is the natural forestlands of Georgia [2] that are revealed to be home to a couple of

rape-happy, rifle-rousing ruffians. Prior to *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, *Deliverance* also indicates that something is icky in the South (ironically the star, Jon Voight, then a Hollywood liberal, would age into an arch-conservative). For more forest-thrillers, catch plasma-packed prototype *Two Thousand Maniacs!* (1964), which is set in Florida [3] (a key swing state in American

elections, embattled between progression and conservatism), Hooper's *Death Trap* (from 1977 – another Texas-set shindig), 1981's *Southern Comfort* (the Republican stronghold of Louisiana [4]) and 1984's *Children Of The Corn* (Nebraska [5]). The coastal cities – LA, San Diego, San Francisco, etc – may be the poster children for liberal America, but rural California [6] has been revealed to harbour some backwards barbarians of its own (1977's *The Hills Have Eyes* and 1980's *Motel Hell*), much like leafy Illinois [7] (the *Halloween* series) and Oregon [8] (1981's *Just Before Dawn*). That said, most contemporary creepers continue to hark back to the same red state stereotypes. For perfect examples of this, look to 2003's *Wrong Turn* (West Virginia [9]), 2006's *Hatchet* (Louisiana), the remake of *Straw Dogs* (Missouri [10]) and Kevin Smith's self-explanatory *Red State* (2011). Darn tootin'.

some humanisation – for instance, he goes over to sit by the window and keep guard after he understands that all of these strangers are suddenly invading his property. So we took that sort of basic mental understanding and used it as a springboard to decide how he would have developed over the intervening decades. I think his character will surprise a lot of fans."

Luessenhop also maintains that, despite it being less than a decade since we last returned to Texas, the time is right for another outing in one of splatter cinema's foremost pieces of fear folklore.

"Yeah, I did think the timing was ideal," he maintains. "This is a totally different film from the movies which Michael [Bay] did – and I really don't want to criticise them or anything, but I do think it is important to point out that the bulk of our story is set in the present. We are not attempting to take the audience back to the Seventies for the entire duration of the movie. The big challenge for us was really to contemporise the franchise, and that was daunting. I mean, making a *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* movie in the first place is no small thing because you are stepping into horror film royalty, you know? It is important to respect that template, and we have done just that. For instance, there is the occasional on screen homage to the 1974 film – which I am sure a lot of fans will pick up on – and we also have cameos from some of the original cast."

NONETHELESS, LUESSENHOP DOES ADMIT THAT HIS HOMEWORK ON

one of slasher cinema's most celebrated series did not stretch too far.

"I never saw the third and fourth films," he reveals. "But I did check out the second one, and I felt that it injected too much camp into the genre; it was all played for laughs. In comparison, the first one just had an artful sense to it – even though it was just these college kids scrambling around in a farmhouse in Texas. It is just very well made and brilliantly photographed. We don't acknowledge part two in this movie – we are a direct sequel to the original."

Moreover, Hooper's first flick, despite its notorious reputation, shows very little in the way of carved-up carcasses and lopped-off limbs. Instead, the 1974 template uses sound and surrounding to maximum, menacing effect – although its lengthy final set piece, in which blonde beauty Marilyn Burns is chased, entrapped and tortured by the Chainsaw family, also resulted in the film being castigated for misogyny in some quarters.

"That aspect was totally on my mind during the making of this film," claims Luessenhop. "These movies are generally about a guy with a chainsaw pursuing a good-looking girl," he laughs. "All I can tell you is that the women in our movie never seek help from their boyfriends or anything. Our leading lady, played by Alexandra Daddario [*Percy Jackson & The Lightning Thief*], solves



Ignoring the sequels, director John Luessenhop instead presents a direct follow-up to Tobe Hooper's 1974 original.



Texas Chainsaw stars *Lost* and *Death Valley*'s Tania Raymonde and singer/actor Trey Songz.

➤ of Texas, but as far as your question goes, I am afraid there's not really anything political in here."

In case you haven't been keeping score, the series spins an incredibly fragmented and largely unrelated back story. Hooper's first two films are related – in story if not in tone (part two is played for laughs and depicts Leatherface and his family as hard-working, Reagan-channelling capitalists) – but as the sequel splatters its cast of villains across the screen, any further follow-up was always going to have trouble adhering to the mythology. Thus, the third and fourth films are actually separate 're-imaginings' of the original – not entirely unlike the Michael Bay-produced spit-shine of 2003.

For *Texas Chainsaw 3D*, the decision was made to do a straight-faced sequel to Hooper's 1974 masterwork – in spite of the nightmarish twists and turbulence this would involve.

"Yeah, this is a direct continuation of Hooper's movie," adds Luessenhop, whose previous credits include the 2010 action drama *Takers*. "Basically, a young girl inherits the Chainsaw estate but, although it looks as if it is a big empty mansion, Leatherface is still around – and he has changed a lot since 1974 [laughs]. He is not a bright young man anymore. In fact, we were always asking ourselves, 'What would Leatherface be like today? What kind of development has he had?' In the original movie he does show



Despite appearances, this movie will apparently look to eradicate the apparent misogyny of yore.

“MAKING A TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE MOVIE IS NO SMALL THING, BECAUSE YOU ARE STEPPING INTO HORROR FILM ROYALTY” JOHN LUESSENHOP

her own problems in the story. The end of the film is all about her and her reaction to this terrifying situation – but she remains strong. I was very sensitive about that. I think it is important to have the viewer care about these kids... we only have a little time to introduce the characters, but I think you get a good sense of who they are. You won't be sitting there hoping that they meet a terrible end. This is not that kind of horror film.”

Inevitably, talk also turns to the use of 3D in this latest bout of power-tool terror. From *My Bloody Valentine* and *Final Destination* to *Saw* and the *Piranha* movies, it seems that fear-filmmakers can't get enough of using the

technology to add an extra depth of death to the on screen splatter. Yet, it is probably safe to say that the form has rarely given us anything even approaching the feeling of being showered with innards or poked in the peepers with a sharp object.

“I think that the 3D in this movie really outdoes itself,” argues Luessenhop. “We did not convert anything – instead, it was all shot in the 3D process. But with that being said, I have not tried to turn this into a Fifties drive-in movie where everything flies at your face. Instead, the technology is used to create an even more terrifying atmosphere. There is more depth to *Leatherface's* house and about

half a dozen hyper-exciting 3D horror moments where you will feel like you are involved in all this mayhem [laughs]. But we don't really use it for the purpose of showing extravagant deaths; there is quite a low body count, and that means that every time someone does die it really shocks you.”

So it is, then, that fright-fans can expect three-dimensional delirium and a more politically correct approach to the treatment of women. However, for those of us who hold on to the Seventies classics – be it the initial outing for *Leatherface* or such contemporaries as *The Last House On The Left* and *The Hills Have Eyes* – it seems that today's gore-masters are hesitant to once again exhibit some commentary alongside the carnage. The result may be a fun thrill ride, and might even encourage the occasional jolt, but it is probably safe to say that the buzz around this particular chainsaw is more popcorn than political. ☞

Texas Chainsaw 3D is in cinemas from 4 January 2013.



INTERVIEW

GRANT MORRISON VERSUS THE HEADLINES

HE'S NOT QUITTING
SUPERHEROES
— SAYING BYE
TO BATMAN
AND SO LONG TO
SUPERMAN — BUT
HE IS TAKING A
BREATH. WHILE
PROJECTS BREW
IN THE MIND OF
GRANT MORRISON,
WE TALK TO THE
LEGENDARY
WRITER ABOUT
WINDING DOWN
BATMAN INC AND
ACTION COMICS,
HIS NEW SERIES
HAPPY! AND WHAT
COMES NEXT...

WORDS LAURA SNEDDON

When Grant Morrison announced that he was finishing his run on both *Action Comics* and *Batman Incorporated* this year and taking a break from the grind of monthly comics, the fan communities went into overdrive. The headlines hit the ground in a storm of over-excited punctuation — Grant Morrison Quits DC! Grant Morrison Finished With Superheroes! Grant Morrison Leaving Comics! — none of which were true.

Morrison is used to his quotes being taken out of context — and in some cases taken out of any hint of reality — but looking beyond the headlines reveals the true story: the writer is moving out of ongoing superhero titles and concentrating on a number of new projects, including superheroes, both within DC and with other publishers, including Image. We caught up with Morrison in a bar in Edinburgh to chat about leaving Clark and Bruce behind and what is yet to come, while noting that the location, The Voodoo Rooms bar, was perhaps a rather apt venue in which to meet the enigmatic writer.

With DC's New 52, the continuity of the DC timeline has been completely updated, squashing decades into a five-year span to create a more contemporary feel. This has, however, resulted in some characters disappearing, which proved controversial with fans, as well as some confusion over which stories in the past are still considered canon. As someone who had previously woven together the entire Batman mythos into one continuous whole, how did Morrison cope with writing *Batman Incorporated* in the new DC Universe?

"I just thought that ultimately it will all eventually stretch out again," Morrison explains. "I thought it was more inclusive to have all of Batman's history in the story

and to even accommodate the fact that his history's kind of changed slightly again, because it will change again. So I just wanted to keep with what I had, and there were some things we had to change — like suddenly Stephanie Brown didn't exist, and Cassandra Cain doesn't exist, and they'll get reintroduced in some way potentially — but I had this really great scene in *Batman Incorporated* #4 with these two characters in it, and I liked them. I thought there were things we could do with it — I liked the fact it was two women there."

The loss of Stephanie Brown, replaced as Batgirl by her original predecessor, Barbara Gordon, has attracted a particularly dramatic reaction from fans. *Batman Incorporated* #3 featured a page where a blonde woman is kidnapped and brainwashed, and subsequently reappears as a redhead with dangerous intent — a play, perhaps, on the change from blonde to red-headed Batgirl?

"No, it wasn't any commentary; sometimes these things just happen spontaneously," Morrison laughs. "So yes, it was commentary if you saw commentary! But no, she's just gone. I liked that character. Not that there's much there, honestly, but there's something."

One character that has remained prominent in Batman's life is his son, Damian, a character that was reintroduced by Morrison six years ago and had largely remained in his care until the New 52 launch. Still a favourite with the fans, Damian currently appears in a number of Bat-titles, including *Batman Incorporated*. Is Morrison kept abreast of what the character is doing in his other adventures?

"I read [the comics] when they come out, but I don't usually get sent anything," he frowns. "I send in these detailed plot synopses at the start of everything... I never see anybody's plot synopses!"

The thought occurs that perhaps others are shown Morrison's outlines rather than the other way around.

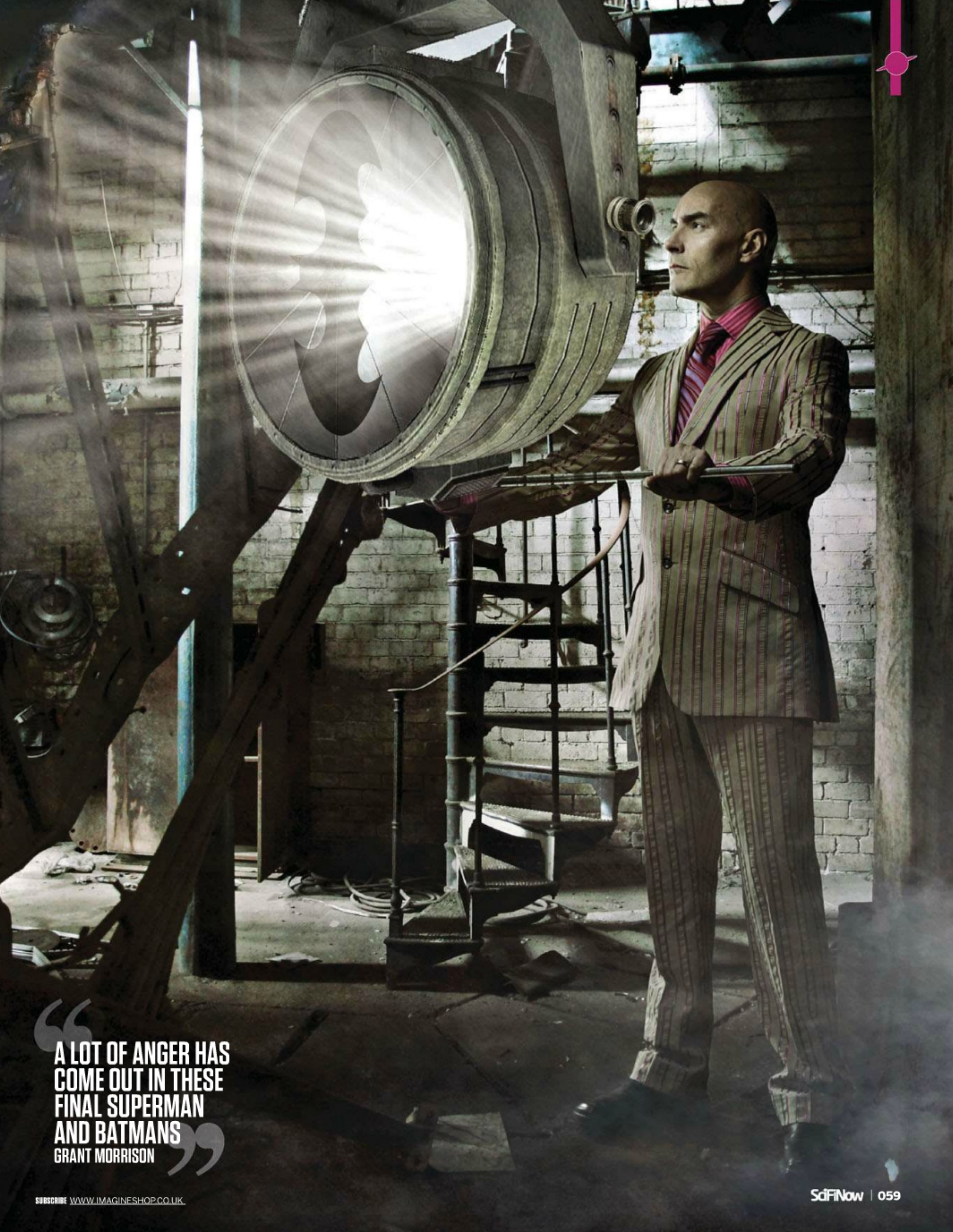
"George Perez didn't seem to get mine!" Morrison laughs. "But yeah, I've no idea what's happening, I just... I don't bother about that stuff. I remember at the start of this they said they wanted to tie in with [Batman writer] Scott Snyder and [Detective Comics writer] Pete Tomasi, and you've got to tell them if you want to do this — I said, 'No, those guys have got their own big stories to tell, I'm sure we'll make it work.' That's why people hate me! But it's not important; I'd rather see what they've got to say, even if I don't necessarily agree with it."

It's clear that Morrison has something particular in mind. "Damian should not have a dog; Damian had a cat," he states flatly. "I'm really upset that they gave him a dog, because we've already seen him growing up in the future with a cat, and I had this plan to introduce this kitten, but he's brought a dog into it..."

The writer tails off glumly, before we remember the arrival of Bat-Cow earlier in the series. "Oh, he's got a cow!" Morrison grins. "So maybe... I think he should have a whole menagerie of bat-animals."

MORRISON IS FINISHING BATMAN INCORPORATED WITH ISSUE 12, AND HAS EXTENDED HIS ACTION COMICS RUN TO ISSUE 17, LONG AFTER HIS INITIALLY planned first six-issue run. While the *Superman* title chronicles the adventures of Superman in the present day, *Action Comics* is set five years in the past, and focuses on a young Clark Kent who has not yet got to grip with his powers. This is the Superman who can leap over buildings, rather than the indestructible god he becomes.

"I was only going to do the first six," he says, "and then [artist] Rags Morales needed a couple of issues off, so I had this insert ➤



“
A LOT OF ANGER HAS
COME OUT IN THESE
FINAL SUPERMAN
AND BATMANS
GRANT MORRISON”

Morrison's Weirdest Moments

Our favourite off-kilter moments from Morrison's DC output



1 Batman: The Return Of Bruce Wayne

Bruce awakes in the time of Neanderthals, having fallen through the timestream. It's like *Doctor Who*, but with Batman!



2 Doom Patrol Issue 36 'Box Of Delights'

The team investigate a disturbance, and wander into a sentient street called Danny – who also happens to be a transvestite.



3 Animal Man Issue 5 'The Coyote Gospel'

A real-life cartoon escapes his hellish dimension to bargain for the good of his people.



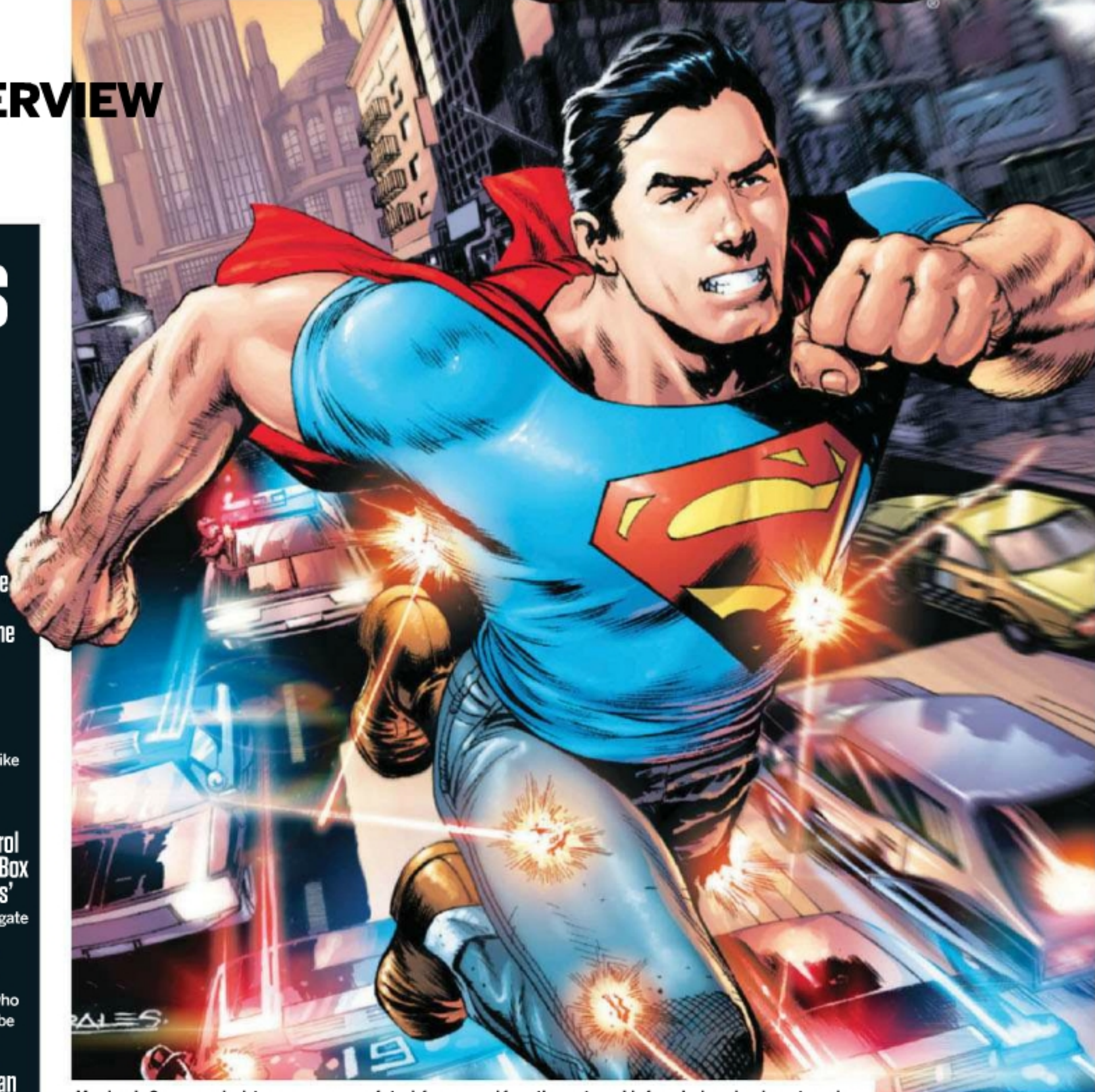
4 Seven Soldiers: Zatanna

The spellaholic and her fellow magic users enter the astral plane, climbing across cubes and panels and above the paths of their past selves.



5 Batman RIP

Bruce Wayne has a psychotic breakdown, makes himself a neon, multi-coloured Batsuit and takes advice from the imaginary Bat-Mite.



Morrison's *Superman* depicts a younger man of steel, far removed from the unstoppable force he is variously portrayed as.



Even while tackling other projects, superhero comics remain in Morrison's crosshairs.





Morrison's run on *Batman Incorporated* has enabled him to keep on writing Damian Wayne, a character he played a large role in developing.

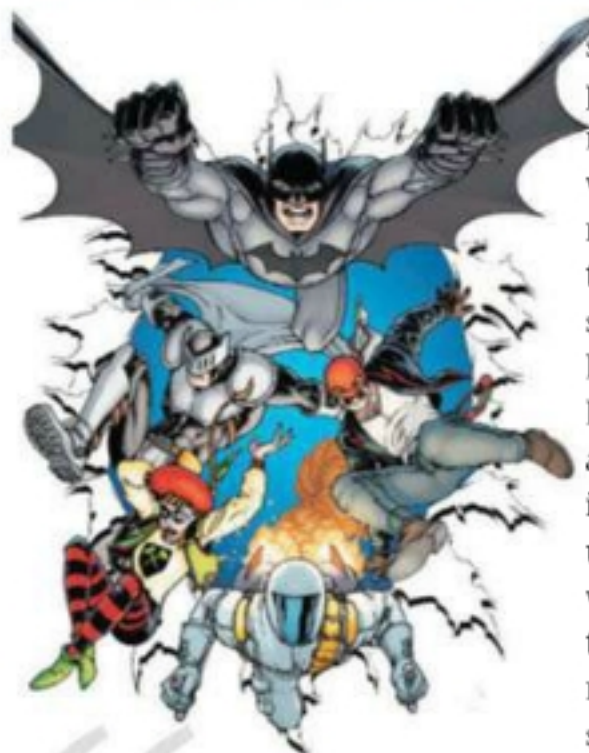
which freaked everybody out, then we came back. After that I had set up things, because I wrote these two issues to fill in, and had to fill them with this future plot, so suddenly I had that to deal with, and I felt I'd better just stay on and finish the story. It ended up turning into something quite interesting."

This is definitely the final stretch, however, with Morrison's last issue due in February. "I felt as if I'd stayed on too long, so once I got this thing it gets quite sinister towards the end," he teases.

The writer is keen to stress that despite some of the headlines, he remains on good terms with the publisher. Indeed, he has more work with them in the following years. Much of his upcoming work with Vertigo and Image remains shrouded in mystery, however.

"Yeah it is a bit," Morrison smiles, "apart from *Seaguy* 3, the final *Seaguy* which I've told everyone I'm doing. But there's other stuff which I haven't talked about yet that's kinda getting done just now."

Is his focus, then, on more finite series rather than ongoing titles? "There's one idea I have, which is a long thing," he says, "because I haven't done anything like that for a while, but most of them are finite. I wanted to tell stories, you know? And again, getting away from some of the stuff that when you're working in the superhero universes it, as I've



**I JUST
DECIDED I
WANTED TO
TELL SOME
STORIES WITH
A BEGINNING,
A MIDDLE AND
AN END**
GRANT MORRISON

said before, it's not a real place. It's a real place in the sense that it's paper, but you're not writing about the real world; you're writing about this other world and the rules in that world and the relationships that form in that world, so there's a synthetic thing about it, which as much as I love it, it's not about here. And although Batman's about fighting against nihilism and the overwhelming sense of chaos in the universe, it's still stuck in the DC universe, and there might be more direct ways to say that. I just decided I want to tell some stories; you know, a beginning, middle and end, a really cool story that someone's sat you down in front of the fire and told you."

HIS CURRENT MINISERIES, *HAPPY!*, WITH ART BY DARICK ROBERTSON AND PUBLISHED BY IMAGE COMICS, IS EXACTLY THAT. ALREADY ATTRACTING RAVE

reviews, the tale of a loser in a hellhole of a town may not sound like something you'd want to read around the fire, but it comes with a spectacular twist: a tiny flying horse, full of optimism that only the protagonist can see.

"It's a really great design that Darick's done; it's just like a special effect. But yeah, when I was sitting thinking a couple of years ago, I had this idea that you know everyone takes the piss out of

celebrities, and takes the piss out of singers and actors and everyone who's trying to create things, no matter how bad they are. I had this notion that a lot of these people are losing their minds doing this. You think, 'This is golden youth; you should be feeling a lot better.'

"So the whole thing became about that struggle, and then into it came this Christmas thing and this really nice little kidnap plot; it's everything horrible about the world. I've got paedophiles, drunks, methadone addicts, Santa Claus is a bastard, your lead character's a failure; he's got all kinds of problems. And into it comes this last fading thing; it doesn't really have long to live, that's what it's about."

With many of the writers and artists that have left DC and Marvel recently turning towards creator-owned projects, Image is quickly becoming one of the most successful publishers around.

"I look at them as almost like the HBO of comics," says Morrison, "where people are going with very specific ideas that maybe wouldn't be able to be published with any of the other companies. The creator-owned thing, for me, I've always owned my own stuff going back to the Seventies, so for me it's not a major issue. It's interesting to see that something's happening right now with a lot of people who've done superhero comics for a few years and started to move out and spread their wings a little bit. But there's always been, for me, a creator-owned book over here, plus a company-owned book over there running at the same time."

Morrison fans can rest assured, though, that he isn't turning his back on superheroes. He's around 30 pages into a 120-page Wonder Woman project, his much-hyped *Multiversity* is due in late 2013, and the writer is clearly very attached to the characters he's been writing for the last few years.

"When you see Batman you have this lovely notion," Morrison laughs, "of 'well, I'll be like that one day, I'm gonna have a big dispenser on the wall, and it's got Caramac in it and Opal Fruits and salt and vinegar crisps, and that's what I'll have when I'm a millionaire.' And Batman's actually got that shit, you know? He's even branded them, so it'll be Batsalt and vinegar crisps. I think that's the appeal – the guy can do anything."

Batman Incorporated and *Action Comics* are currently ongoing from DC Comics, while *Happy!* is available from Image Comics. *Supergods: Our World In The Age Of The Superhero* is now available in paperback, priced at £9.99.

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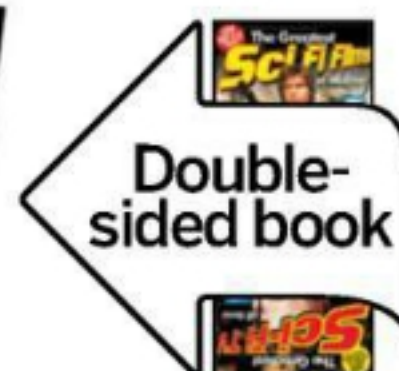
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SciFiNow Reviews

Our thoughts on the pick of the entertainment releases out this month

★★★★★ Outstanding ★★★★★ Thoroughly entertaining ★★★ Good but somewhat lacking ★★ Fair at best ★ Avoid as you should *Goodnight Sweetheart*

67 LIFE OF PI

"A FEAT OF MODERN FILM-MAKING MASTERY"

Read all the latest reviews
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DVD? Discover our opinions on the latest film and television releases and add your own comments.
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TRIVIA SPIDER-MAN ACTOR TOBEY MAGUIRE FILMED FOR A ROLE IN *LIFE OF PI* BUT HIS PART WAS SCRAPPED AND RE-CAST, AS THE DIRECTOR DECIDED THAT SUCH A FAMOUS ACTOR FOR SUCH A SMALL ROLE WOULD BE DISTRACTING.

FILM INFO

Released

Out now

Certificate

15

Director

Ben Wheatley

Screenwriters

Alice Lowe, Steve Oram,

Amy Jump

Cast

Alice Lowe, Steve Oram,

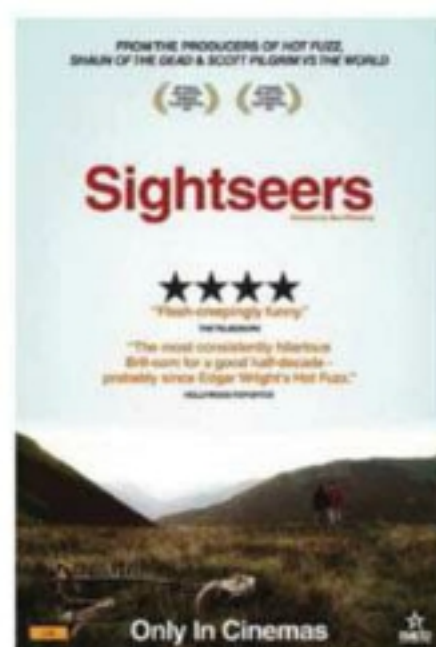
Eileen Davies

Distributor

StudioCanal

Running Time

88 mins



FIVE OTHER MOVIES ABOUT HOLIDAYS YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO GO ON

1. Withnail And I

Two out-of-work actors go on holiday by accident, and find the English countryside a miserable and unwelcoming place.

2. Wolf Creek

Based on 'true events' that never actually happened, this sees three backpackers fall victim to a sadistic serial killer.

3. The Ruins

Visiting the site of a remote archaeological dig turns out to be a terrible idea for a group of American holidaymakers.

4. The Descent

Spelunking is a bad idea at the best of times, but when the caves are unexplored – and inhabited – it becomes an even worse way to spend a vacation.

5. Open Water

Two hapless scuba divers are accidentally left behind by their tour group in shark-infested waters.



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SIGHTSEERS

Fun and murder on a summer holiday

Going on holiday with a new partner can be a stressful experience. Away from familiar surroundings, freed from the structure of everyday routine and without the opportunity to spend much time apart, it's amazing what you'll learn about another person. Over the course of a week in a caravan together, *Sightseers'* Tina (Alice Lowe) and Chris (Steve Oram) find out more than they ever really wanted to know – and in the process reveal a lot about the suppressed rage simmering beneath middle England's polite exterior.

Even before they've finished packing their bags, the couple's holiday seems doomed. Tina's overbearing mother (Eileen Davies) takes a violent dislike to Chris, and tries to persuade her not to go. Her warnings (that they'll have a horrible time, Chris can't be trusted, Tina's a heartless dog murderer) are still ringing in our ears as the trip begins, and though she stays at home, the spectre of Tina's

miserable mother looms large over the whole film. Because she's almost right: Chris isn't what he seems, and the holiday is a disaster. As the couple trek across the country, visiting every sad little museum and crumbling castle they can find, they leave a trail of death and destruction in their wake. It's horrifying, depressing and somehow very, very funny, too.

Written by Lowe and Oram, *Sightseers* is incredibly dark, but its well-observed characters and instantly quotable dialogue are infused with black comedy. The humour and horror are expertly balanced; while you'll laugh at the many funny moments, you'll never giggle through any of the violence. Gore is used sparingly but effectively, and a combination of clever editing and sound design make it seem even more violent than it is.

Yet, as evil as they are, *Sightseers* never loses sight of its humanity. Tina and Chris seem like an ordinary couple – even when they're doing extraordinarily nasty things. There's no justification for any of the violence, and there's no grandeur to it; it's all petty and driven by low-level irritation and frustration. Despite the occasional leanings towards farce, there's something horribly familiar about the world it portrays, and the performances by the two leads are worryingly believable.

At some point, even the countryside seems complicit. Director Ben Wheatley makes Yorkshire's sweeping landscapes simultaneously beautiful and bleak; Tina and Chris often appear to be completely alone in an empty world, and in many ways they are. Nothing is ever straightforward; every joke is shot through with resentment and every moment of horror cut with pathos, until the humour, anger, and sadness become inextricably linked.

Sightseers isn't a comfortable watch; in another film the cosy trappings of an old-fashioned English holiday might have seemed twee, even reassuring, but here they're turned into something more sinister. While other British horror-comedies like *Shaun Of The Dead* and *Cockneys Vs Zombies* temper their scares with the promise that traditional Britishness will ultimately triumph over evil, *Sightseers* exposes that as an optimistic lie. Here, Britishness is the horror. And that's really scary.

Sarah Dobbs

VERDICT ★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Garth Marengi's
Darkplace

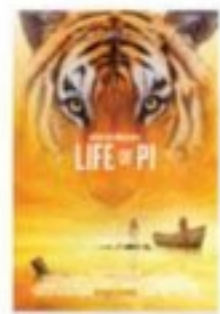
Alice Lowe plays the put-upon Liz in this spoof documentary series.





LIFE OF PI A boy and a pussycat went to sea

Details PG // 127 mins // 20 December **Director** Ang Lee **Screenwriter** David Magee
Cast Irrfan Khan, Suraj Sharma, Tabu, Adil Hussain **Distributor** 20th Century Fox



Before telling the story of his life, the adult Pi Patel (Irrfan Khan) sells it as an adventure that will make you "believe in God." It's a bold claim,

but a fittingly grandiose one, for while it's hardly going to turn atheists into believers, *Life Of Pi* is a feat of modern film-making mastery.

Based on Yann Martell's 2001 novel, it tells how Piscine 'Pi' Molitor Patel (Suraj Sharma), a charming Indian boy from Pondicherry, goes from a happy childhood of spiritual discovery and larking about in his parents' zoo to being shipwrecked for 227 days with only a hungry Bengal tiger named Richard Parker for company. Story-wise, the concept is engrossing enough, with themes of survival and belief that could have so easily veered into preachy sentimentality being scripted with a profound sense of deftness. Yet, as good as it is on its own, the script feels almost secondary to Ang Lee's

directorial vision – a vision that shines forth from every shot, defining the film's fantastical idealism.

Life Of Pi's story is one that, above all, is about finding hope among the extremities of desperation – where animal and human know no difference – yet Lee also manages to articulate beauty in emptiness. From the pivoting set-piece of a storm sinking Pi's ship (a sequence that, much like the rage of the ocean, engulfs the senses), Lee makes a point of framing his shipwrecked shots like paintings of desolation, with the sea and sky playing as much of a role in the grandeur as a carnivorous island of meerkats or the sudden leap of a whale or Richard the tiger. Even the use of 3D – at its best during the opening titles – is infused with the poetry of nature.

In time, as our hero's life dwindles, his body and mind ravaged by starvation, the validity of his extraordinary account comes into question. The doubt jars – even if it has been whirring uncomfortably in the back of your mind. Why? Because this wouldn't be a lie you watched; this would be a lie you lived. Either way, it's definitely worth watching.

Stephen Kelly
FILM ★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Spirited Away
 More fantastical than *Life Of Pi*, but Studio Ghibli's masterpiece shares its vivid imagination.



SAFETY NOT GUARANTEED FAO: Time Travellers

Details TBC // 86 mins // 26 December 2012 **Director** Colin Trevorrow
Screenwriter Derek Connolly **Cast** Aubrey Plaza, Mark Duplass, Jake Johnson
Distributor Vertigo Films



Inspired by a real – if not entirely serious – 1997 classified ad asking for a time travel companion, *Safety Not Guaranteed* imagines a scenario

where it wasn't written as a joke. The answer, according to writer Derek Connolly and director Colin Trevorrow, isn't really about a time machine at all. Instead, the prospect of time travel serves more as a conduit for angst, fear and regret – a poignant reminder for all characters that time is eroding and what is done is done.

Carrying these themes is the mysterious loner behind the ad, Kenneth Collway (Mark Duplass), and Seattle journalists Jeff (Jake Johnson), Arnau (Karan Soni) and Darius (Aubrey Plaza), who are sent to investigate him. Once set up, the plot splits between two relationships: the main one between sullen, disillusioned intern Darius and kindred weirdo Collway, and a sub-plot where the obnoxiously shallow Jeff pursues an old flame, only to find that she, as humans tend to do, has aged. While both are glossed with a *Juno*-esque brand of hipster quirk that endears as much

as it annoys, it is the former that manages to overshadow the latter's weak and unnecessary existential crisis – a crisis sadly smothered by Jeff's tendency to be a dick.

Having gained the paranoid Collway's trust, it is up to Darius – played excellently by *Parks And Recreation*'s Aubrey Plaza – to get the scoop from inside the world of an eccentric. The further she ventures into that world, however, the more she finds Kenneth is someone she can finally relate to – even though he believes he can travel through time. The ensuing romance, although clunky at times, is gradual and sweet, while the story's central sci-fi mystery of whether he has actually done it is handled with a gentle sense of slow-burning subtlety – a trait reflective of the film on the whole.

Safety Not Guaranteed may not be perfect, but it has its heart in the right place – and in the world of cinema that is something worth far more than money.

Stephen Kelly
FILM ★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



FAQ About Time Travel
 Another indie comedy dealing with the subject of temporal physics.



BERBERIAN SOUND STUDIO

Reel fear

See it now!
Must see now!

Details 15 // 92 mins // 2012 // **DVD** // £11/£13.99 **Released** 31st December
Director Peter Strickland **Cast** Toby Jones, Tonia Sotiropoulou, Susanna Cappellaro, Cosimo Fusco **Distributor** Artificial Eye **Extras** TBC



From the moment diminutive sound engineer Gilderoy (Toby Jones) – brought over from England for the post-production of ghoulish giallo flick 'The Equestrian Vortex' – steps through the doors of the titular studio, a sense of unease slides in like fog and builds with creeping certainty as Peter Strickland, the much applauded director of *Katalin Varga*, makes good on his acclaim.

Shot in both Italian and English, Gilderoy's poor grasp of the former marks him out as like us, a voyeur into the drama playing out. Ignored by the cast and glowered at by an elderly rival, he struggles to prise his airfare from the disdainful receptionist and sneering producer with Kafka-esque impotence. His alienation is only enhanced as he either hears things unfold without us seeing them, or sees things accompanied only by music or silence through the soundproof glass of his control booth.

Tethered to his charmingly provincial way of life by letters from his mother, the crunch of autumn leaves and a UFO sound effect he perfected for children's TV, he grows

gradually more transfixed by the events unfolding – whose effects he simulates, from pulling a witch's hair out with the stalks of radishes to stabbing a lettuce in lieu of human flesh, and eventually a sizzling frying pan to capture a hot poker in some ladyparts. Later, a cast member who confides in Gilderoy with fearsome intensity goes berserk, scattering tape across the control booth, a letter from his mother takes on a tone of gothic foreboding and the phrase "It must have been the magpies" echoes around him.

There's a touch of everything from *Almost Famous* to *The Devil's Advocate* in the idea of a sheltered soul exposed to a world of squalid glamour, and a whole lot of Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* and Roman Polanski's *The Tenant* in this brilliantly intimate tale of suspense and sanity that cements Strickland's cinematic cache.

James Hoare
FILM ★★★★★ **EXTRAS** N/A

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Shadow Of The Vampire
E Elias Merhige's underrated chiller depicts the obsession of Nosferatu.



ZOMBIE FLESH EATERS

The real Dead Island

See it now!
Must see now!

Details 18 // 85 mins // 1979 // **DVD** // £11 **Released** Out now **Director** Lucio Fulci
Cast Tisa Farrow, Ian McCulloch, Richard Johnson, Al Cliver **Distributor** Arrow Films
Extras 'Aliens, Cannibals And Zombies: A Trilogy Of Italian Terror', 'From Romero To Rome: The Rise And Fall Of The Italian Zombie Film', 'The Meat Munching Movies Of Gino De Rossi', Trailers, Commentary and more



Received wisdom has it that George Romero's 1978 shocker *Dawn Of The Dead* nailed the story, and Lucio Fulci's career-defining *Zombie Flesh Eaters* the style.

Its zombies were certainly grubbier and more earthen, its locations more evocative and its cinematography endlessly ahead of its time. The claustrophobic fish bowl close-ups, intense, creeping POVs, lurid use of light and colour and even its action scenes are more intimate and visceral in a way that few have matched, let alone bettered.

If a story is simply a device that moves the plot seamlessly along the film's various waypoints then Fulci triumphs in those stakes, too. The bare bones of the plot – a bubbling gumbo of HG Wells' *The Island Of Dr Moreau* and, of course, *Night Of The Living Dead* – is neat enough. When a boat belonging to Anne Bowles' (Tisa Farrow) father washes up in New York, filled with rotting food and a cop-killing corpse, she and reporter Peter West (*Survivors* Ian McCulloch) set off for the island of Matool – his last known whereabouts, enlisting the help and boat of Bryan Curt (*The Beyond*'s Al Cliver) and Susan Barrett (Auretta Gay). On Matool they discover an island in the

grip of a mysterious infection, and the supremely shiftily Doctor David Menard (*Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*'s Richard Johnson) running a clinic. Inevitably, the dead rise and flesh-eating ensues.

It's easy to see contrivances around every corner if you're so inclined – the crew pulling over so Susan can enjoy a gratuitously topless scuba dive and witness that iconic zombie/shark title bout doesn't exactly add anything to the plot, but it doesn't take away from it, and it looks absolutely stunning to boot – especially in the crisp and cinematic HD transfer and restoration. There's nothing meaningful about consumerism to chew over, although you're welcome to project your own post-colonial creed onto this tale of a white doctor experimenting on hapless islanders, who in turn rise from the grave to exact their revenge – but it is fantastic fun.

Sure, *Dawn Of The Dead* might be the one you wrote your thesis on, but *Zombie Flesh Eaters* is the one you will watch over and over again.

James Hoare
FILM ★★★★★ **EXTRAS** ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Beyond
Fulci's weirdest and gristliest zombie movie by far – a woman vomits her intestines as non-sequiturs attack.



Sci-Fi Now
Must
see now!

THE DARK KNIGHT RISES

Bale bows out

Details 12 // 165 mins // 2012 // **DVD** // £9.99/£14.99 **Released** Out now
Director Christopher Nolan **Cast** Christian Bale, Tom Hardy, Anne Hathaway
Distributor Warner Home Video **Extras** TBC



This 'difficult third film' was always going to be tricky enough without having to follow two films that not only laid an unquestioned claim to the title 'modern classic', but nailed the comic-book movie formula to such an extent that it has laid the benchmark for much of what has followed it: the likes of *Dredd*, *The Amazing Spider-Man*, *Arrow* and even *Skyfall* have acknowledged the first two instalments of Christopher Nolan's Bat-trilogy as creative touchstones. *The Dark Knight Rises* doesn't provide any definite answers to the third-film quandary, but it nonetheless provides a triumphant conclusion to one of the most gripping sagas of the 21st Century in any medium.

Nolan, as the architect of this, is to be applauded. Right from the jaw-dropping aerial opening act that introduces as to the new muscle, Bane (Tom Hardy), through the subsequent miasma of scenes that give every cast member – be they the battle-worn Jim Gordon (Gary Oldman) and the feisty but vulnerability-permeated Selina Kyle (Anne Hathaway) or rookie cop John Blake (Joseph Gordon-Levitt)

– a chance to shine. Dominant at the centre of it all, however, is Bruce Wayne himself (Christian Bale). Haunted by his failures, he belies his 'damaged goods' tag, with Bale giving mileage to a character who was prone to being overshadowed by his more flamboyant adversaries in previous instalments. In a pleasant twist of fate, nuance wins.

Much has been made of the apparently Occupied-inspired themes prevalent throughout, which has been prey to some contentious critical readings, but even with this in mind it's hard to let it get in the way of such a riotous conclusion to the film series.

Pooh-poohed by the same critics who have arbitrarily decided to decry the formula they once championed, *The Dark Knight Rises* is nonetheless a heart-stopping, tension-ridden joy-ride of a film – both a fitting last act and a breathtaking slice of theatre in its own right.

Steve Wright
FILM ★★★★★ **EXTRAS** TBC

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Batman Begins
Arguably overshadowed by *The Dark Knight*, we recommend going back to where it started.



TOTAL RECALL

Immediately forgettable

Details 12 // 118 mins // 2012 // **DVD** // £19.99/£24.99 **Released** 26 December
Director Len Wiseman **Cast** Colin Farrell, Kate Beckinsale, Jessica Biel **Distributor** Sony Pictures Home Entertainment **Extras** Extended Director's Cut + Commentary, Theatrical Cut, Total Recall Insight Mode, Gag Reel, 9 featurettes, Stepping into Recall Pre-visualisation sequences, God Of War: Ascension PlayStation 3 Playable Demo



As if there wasn't already enough bloated/misguided remakes/reimaginings of successful properties to be getting on with, along comes *Total Recall*, with this interpretation coming from the mind of Len Wiseman, purveyor of such sure-fire classics as *Underworld: Evolution* and *Live Free Or Die Hard*.

When looking at a remake, the temptation to go back to the original source is unavoidable. In this case it is definitely not recommended, as a re-watch of Paul Verhoeven's 1990 cult favourite only serves as a stark reminder of just how badly the team behind this one ballsed up. In the former, the core cast of Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sharon Stone and Michael Ironside didn't exactly deliver performances worthy of high accolades, but they were evocative and memorable nonetheless. In this instance, Colin Farrell is simply too bland a lead. Coupled with a decent director and plot he can be utterly hypnotic (see *In Bruges* and *Tigerland* as proof of his capacity to make the screen his own), but here, shorn of any dramatic underpinning, he lacks vital presence in the central role. Coupled to this, Kate Beckinsale and Jessica Biel are interchangeably dull (that they look

similar to each other doesn't help), while others are let down badly – Bill Nighy through lack of screen time and Bryan Cranston through the lack of anything to do other than growl and sneer.

The confusion among the cast radiates through the rest of the film (speaking of radiation, the removal of the Mars-related background element means no mutants, which makes the inevitable appearance of the three-breasted lady from Verhoeven's original all the more baffling). Dull choreographed fight after dull choreographed fight sporadically punctuates extended chase scenes, all the while heading towards a dull climax stripped of the bulk of the subtext that made its predecessor such a pleasure.

With the upheaval currently taking place in our own world, the time was ripe for someone to embellish an old story with a contemporary subject matter relevant to our time. Instead, *Total Recall* manages to be not only irrelevant, but forgettable, too.

Steve Wright
FILM ★★★★★ **EXTRAS** ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Minority Report
Steven Spielberg shows how you do Philip K Dick justice on the big screen.

SHOW INFO

Details

12 // 998 mins // 1988

Creator

Gene Roddenberry

Cast

Patrick Stewart,
Jonathan Frakes,
Brent Spiner, LeVar
Burton, Michael Dorn,
Diana Muldaur, Marina
Sirtis, Wil Wheaton,
Whoopi Goldberg

DISC

Details

Out now // £69.99 // 

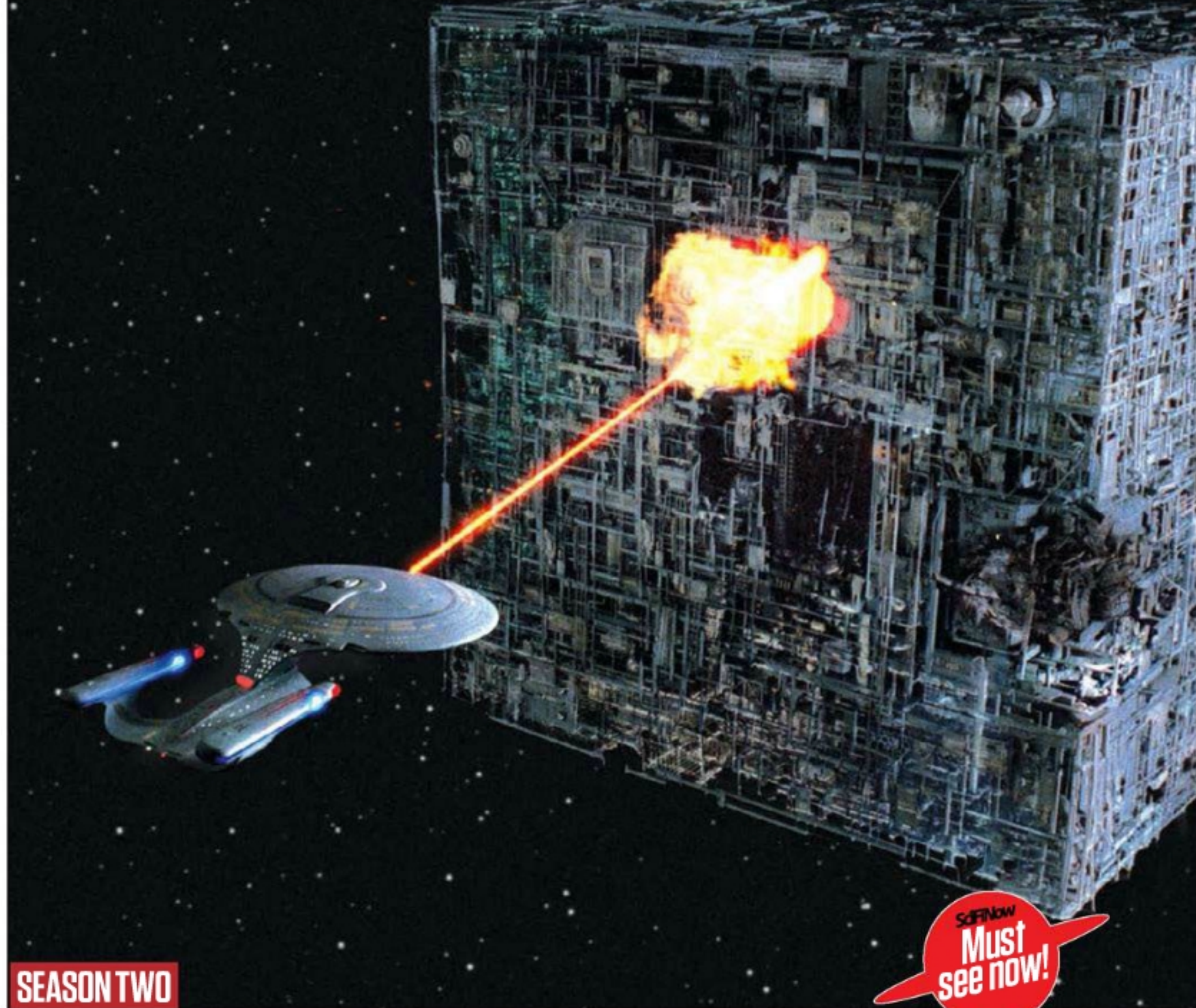
Distributor

Entertainment One

Extras

Details

- Reunification: 25 years after *Star Trek: The Next Generation* cast interview
- Mission overview: Year two
- Making it so: continuing *Star Trek: The Next Generation*
- Episode promos
- 1988 Reading Rainbow segment with LeVar Burton
- Archival Mission Log: Department Briefing Year 2 – production
- 'The Measure Of A Man' HD extended version and hybrid extended version
- Audio commentary of HD extended version of 'The Measure Of A Man' with Melinda Snodgrass and Michael and Denise Okuda
- Gag reel
- Inside Starfleet Archives
- Selected crew analysis: Year two



SEASON TWO

Sci-Fi Now
Must
see now!

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION

Not a facepalm in sight

Ask any Trekkie how they feel about the early seasons of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, and you will perhaps notice a slight wince and some mumbled words on character arcs, possibly followed by the words "But it gets really good in Season Three."

It's more than a little unfair that the plainly successful foundations on which *TNG* was built are sometimes dismissed as merely killing time until *Locutus* by even the most ardent fans, especially when Season Two in particular marked such a huge step forward for the show.

It was a season of change and renewal, which saw the show cast off the unwieldy elements of its past and blaze a trail for itself with a few additions to the still fresh-out-the-box ensemble and some great storytelling, and frankly the series has never looked better.

An astounding amount of work and devotion has gone into remastering the series in high definition, so it's no surprise that the first thing that strikes you is how damn good it looks.

What the team behind this restoration have done is go back to the 35mm negatives and recut each episode using the original

elements and convert the new version to HD. Shots and visual effects from those master copies have been recomposited, thus retaining the 4:3 aspect ratio and a healthy respect for the work of all those involved first time around.

The later seasons had a more timeless look to them, but any die-hard *TNG* fan would concede that the washed-out colours and often brash lighting of the first seasons dated many episodes prematurely. Here the reds, golds and



Season Two saw more being revealed about races like the Klingons.





Whoopi Goldberg gave the show some unexpected star appeal.

“AN ASTOUNDING AMOUNT OF WORK HAS GONE INTO REMASTERING THE SERIES IN HIGH DEFINITION”

blues look more vibrant, the set dressing pops and make-up holds up – even after almost 25 years.

Most impressive of all are the exterior shots of the Enterprise in all its 1080p glory. From the glow of the nacelles to the detail on the planet of the week, it's glorious to watch, particularly with that triumphant 7.DTS-HD soundtrack. Darker shots show a nice level of film grain, too, which adds a cinematic and moody feel.

So what's new for this second season? Riker (Jonathan Frakes)'s beard for one, Geordi (LeVar Burton)'s promotion to chief engineer and a few casting headlines; Denise Crosby's departure and her character Tasha Yar's death meant Worf (Michael Dorn) took on more of a central role, while Gates McFadden (who played Beverly Crusher)'s run-ins with the producers over sexist elements in the scripts led to her being fired according to some frank accounts in the box set's extras.

McFadden was replaced by Diana Muldaur, who played Dr Katherine Pulaski, badged by some as a female McCoy, but was really more of a straight-talking broad with hard edges. Muldaur was a familiar face to *Star Trek* fans, having appeared twice in the original series in the episodes 'Return To Tomorrow' and 'Is There In Truth No Beauty?' Pulaski's caustic temperament and stubbornness put her in conflict with Captain Picard (Patrick Stewart), and her initial scepticism of Data (Brent Spiner) as a sentient being made her a little hard to relate to. That said, her character's passion for science and talent for medicine made her stand out as a yet another brilliant mind in the Enterprise crew.

The biggest casting news of the season was the introduction of comedian and actress Whoopi Goldberg, then a Golden Globe winner and Oscar nominee, as Ten Forward bartender Guinan. A *Star Trek* fan since childhood, Goldberg asked LeVar Burton to put a word in for her ➤

TOP FIVE EPISODES

The high points of the series



1 THE MEASURE OF A MAN

A cyberneticist eager to replicate Data's positronic brain claims the android should be submitted to disassembly, in the process risking his life and setting an ugly precedent – that artificial life forms are property, not people. It's a moral dilemma the show sinks its teeth into with relish, and Picard's vindication of his friend's rights shows *Star Trek* at its best.



2 Q WHO

The Borg were hinted at in Season One finale 'The Neutral Zone', but it wasn't until 'Q Who' that the most famous of the Enterprise D's adversaries made themselves known. The most significant episode of the season in terms of legacy, 'Q Who' sets up the Borg as a relentless and unwavering enemy and a completely new threat, as well as a taste of things to come.



3 A MATTER OF HONOR

Riker takes part in an officer exchange program on a Klingon ship, where he learns about their culture and earns the respect of the crew. The post-Khitomer Accord world is more geared towards learning from other races and civilisations than the Kirk 'punch it till it bleeds' era, and this episode shows Klingons as more than Bat'leth-wielding baddies.



4 THE EMISSARY

Worf's old flame – ambassador K'Ehleyr – appears on the Enterprise in a landmark episode for the character. The half human, half Klingon is intriguing as the first female Klingon character to be explored in any great depth, and her conflicting human and Klingon sides make for some interesting scenes – something picked up in *Voyager* with the character of B'Elanna Torres.



5 ELEMENTARY, DEAR DATA

Yes, it's a holodeck episode, but a damn good one, as Data and Geordi try their hand at sleuthing. Geordi tries to up the program difficulty by making a character that can match Data, inadvertently creating a Moriarty who wishes to live beyond the holodeck. His self awareness mirrors Data's own struggles to be recognised as more than the Pinocchio of the crew.

AND THE WORST EPISODE OF THE SEASON...



SHADES OF GREY

An unfortunate side effect of the 1988 Writers Strike was the finale, which reused old footage to pad out a thin premise that has Riker in sick bay staving off a disease made better and worse by memories. A terrible episode that takes a lot of the progress made by the show for granted.

HEY, IT'S THAT GUY!

Some of the familiar faces to be found in Season Two



BRIAN THOMPSON
Klag, 'A Matter Of Honor'

Recognisable to fans of *The X-Files* as the alien bounty hunter, he also appeared in *Generations* again as a Klingon, *Deep Space Nine* as a Dosi and as Romulan admiral Valdore in *Enterprise*.



TERI HATCHER
Lieutenant BG Robinson, 'The Outrageous Okona'

Long before Lois or Wisteria Lane, she could be spotted operating the transporter controls that brought intergalactic cad Thadiun Okona aboard the *Enterprise*.



CAROLYN SEYMOUR
Subcommander Taris, 'Contagion'

Seymour returned to play another Romulan in 'Face Of The Enemy', and is best known to British audiences as *Survivors* Abby Grant and AI's evil counterpart in *Quantum Leap*.



PADDI EDWARDS
Anya, 'The Dauphin'

Edwards was unmistakably the voice of Gozer the Gozerian from *Ghostbusters*, as well as voicing both of Ursula's evil minions in *The Little Mermaid*, Flotsam and Jetsam.



W MORGAN SHEPPARD
Dr Ira Graves, 'The Schizoid Man'

He returned to *Star Trek* as the commandant of Rura Penthe penal colony in the *Voyager* episode 'Bliss', and was head of the Vulcan Science Council in JJ Abrams' *Star Trek*.



SUZIE PLAKSON
Doctor Selar, 'The Schizoid Man'

Appeared as Vulcan doctor Selar and Klingon ambassador K'Ehleyr in quick succession, and went on to play the female Q in *Voyager* and Andorian Imperial Guard Tarah in *Enterprise*.



RANDY OGLESBY
Riva's Chorus, 'Loud As A Whisper'

He appeared twice in *Deep Space Nine*, including as Silaran Prin in 'The Darkness And The Light', as well as playing Brenari refugee Kir in *Voyager* and making two appearances in *Enterprise*.



MICK FLEETWOOD
Antedean, 'Manhunt'

The Fleetwood Mac drummer and fan of the show donned fish-like prosthetics for his appearance on *TNG* – a marked improvement on his performance at that year's Brit Awards with Sam Fox.



This new restoration truly allows viewers to experience the otherworldly majesty of the series.

with the producers, who while perplexed that she was interested in signing up to a syndicated TV show, jumped at the chance to have her on board. Her character had an unexplained connection to Picard, was familiar with trickster-in-residence Q (John de Lancie) and had experience of the series' most iconic addition to *Star Trek* canon: the Borg.

'Q Who' is the first outing for the unstoppable juggernaut that is the Borg, and the remastered visuals are a marvel

to behold. The Borg cube inspires as much awe now as it did back at the time of transmission. The memorable reveal shot inside the Borg cube – which showed the sheer scale of the ship and its sinister crew – has been remastered using a new digital matte painting based on Syd Dutton's original, used only because the brush strokes of that painting would have been visible in HD.

Standout extras include a HD gag reel full of corpsing, giggling fits



Classic episode 'A Matter Of Honor' saw Riker bond with his Klingon allies.



This season also marked the first appearance of the deadly Borg.

and wonderfully playful moments from the cast. There are wonderful documentaries featuring contributions from project overseers Michael and Denise Okuda and visual effects supervisor Dan Curry. Collectors will experience pangs of envy towards Penny Juday, the art department coordinator and *Star Trek* archivist who has everything from blueprints and artwork to original models made for the television shows and movies – even the piece cut from the

“YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN THE EPISODES LOOK THIS GOOD”

saucer section of the Enterprise D by the Borg in ‘Q Who.’

A rather marvellous bonus feature is an extended cut of the courtroom episode ‘The Measure Of A Man’, which was written by sci-fi novelist and former attorney Melinda Snodgrass. Her episode over-ran by 13 minutes, but she was gifted a VHS tape of the full cut by the production staff. Thankfully for us, she kept hold of the tape, and the full episode appears as a HD extended version. There’s even a commentary track from her and a hybrid version which cuts between the HD remastered episode and the newly discovered footage from her VHS tape.

Snodgrass’s audio commentary on the extended HD version of ‘The Measure Of A Man’ reveals that her initial teaser for the episode featured Data trying to swim rather than the poker game, which became a recurring scene in *TNG*. The final shot of ‘All Good Things’ is of a poker game between the senior officers.

An hour-long interview with the reunited cast features some fantastic anecdotes that hardcore fans might be familiar with, and is another fantastic addition to the set.

The first season had the unenviable task of trying to revive an iconic series – something Patrick Stewart had been warned against even while

attempting it. The stories felt uneven, actors needed to find their characters underneath the tight jumpsuits and there was a feeling that the show was not just in the shadow of its Sixties predecessor; rather visibly clinging to it for dear life – an opinion emphasised by the skimpy outfits of ‘Haven’ to ‘The Naked Now’ a virtual remake of original series’ episode ‘The Naked Time’ which George Takei once likened to kids dressing up as their parents and “trying to act like grown-ups.”

Season Two is when *TNG* stepped out of the shadow of Kirk et al and began to emphatically find its own voice. There are some misfires, of course, but the characters are more fleshed out, the storylines are stronger and there’s a growing confidence to the show that is still massively appealing. For fans of *TNG* and newcomers alike, this collection is a no-brainer – you have never seen these episodes look so good, and there are extras aplenty to keep you entertained.

Krystal Sim

SHOW ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Babylon 5
Contained complex storytelling, fantastic character development and memorable performances.





WIZARDS VS ALIENS

Wizards Vs Aliens? We wonder what that's about...

Details PG // 336 mins // 2012 // **DVD** // £17.99 **Creators** Russell T Davies, Phil Ford **Cast** Scott Haran, Percelle Ascott, Gwendoline Christie, Brian Blessed **Distributor** Fremantle Home Entertainment **Extras** Deleted scenes, Bloopers, Photogallery



The death of Elisabeth Sladen obviously meant the end of *The Sarah Jane Adventures*. After all, how could you ever replace her? Thankfully, faced with

a *TSJA*-shaped void, Russell T Davies and Phil Ford didn't try to, for their new children's sci-fi, *Wizards Vs Aliens*, manages to be more than a mere echo.

The simple premise encapsulated in the title, *Wizards Vs Aliens* tells the story of Tom (Scott Haran), a 16-year-old schoolboy caught up in a fight for the wizarding world's survival against the Nekross: an alien race that roams the cosmos to gorge on magic. Along for the ride is his 'unenchanting' father (Michael Higgs), magical grandmother (Annette Badland) and genius best friend Benny (Percelle Ascott).

It starts bold, with its opening scene of a huge, striking spaceship interrupting a magical ceremony establishing straight away not only the show's central concept, but its scale and

ambition. It's also within these first two episodes where the rules, relationships and deeper mysteries of the show are set up. From there, the series follows a format where the low hum of the Nekross arc is ever present, but with each two-parter tackling it in wildly different ways. It certainly makes each week interesting, but with each story having a self-contained quality to it, the tone does tend to jar between episodes, notably the fun, throwaway 'Grazlax Attacks' and the surprisingly dark follow-up 'Rebel Magic'.

What remains consistent, however, is the quality of the writing. Sharp, funny and clever, it embraces its young audience without patronising them. It helps, of course, that the cast delivering it do so with conviction – especially the likeable Haran and Gwendoline Christie, who as Nekross Lexi gets to show the fun and warmth she can't as Brienne in *Game Of Thrones*.

All of which points towards something that, once it finds its feet, could indeed become something out of this magical world.

Stephen Kelly
SHOW ★★★★★ **EXTRAS** ★★☆☆☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Sarah Jane Adventures
Marked the point where CBBC started taking sci-fi seriously.



THE SECRET OF CRICKLEY HALL

Death in Downton

Details 15 // 175 mins // 2012 // **DVD** // £9.70 **Creator** Joe Ahearne **Cast** Suranne Jones, Tom Ellis, Douglas Henshall, Olivia Cooke **Distributor** Zentertain **Extras** TBC



For an author of his standing, it initially appears odd that few have attempted to adapt James Herbert's work, although with closer

inspection uncovering themes of child abuse and mass murder, this reticence becomes understandable. Such is the beguilingly compelling nature of *The Secret Of Crickley Hall*, however, you may start to wish that more had taken the plunge.

Starting off in present day, a young family move to the titular country house a year after the disappearance of their youngest member. Having shared a psychic bond with her son, Eve (Suranne Jones) starts to hear his voice again. At this point the narrative dovetails into flashbacks to 1943, where young teacher Nancy (Olivia Cooke) becomes worried about the welfare of the orphans the hall houses, where the frosty Magda Cribben (Sarah Smart) and her sadistic, war-damaged brother Augustus (Douglas Henshall) rule with an iron rod. Her subsequent investigation has tragic consequences that spiral into present day, where they threaten to envelope Eve and her

family as history, influenced by the sinister ghosts of the hall's macabre past, looks to brutally repeat itself.

Ghost stories are susceptible of descending into cliché, and *Crickley Hall* is occasionally guilty of this, but makes up for it with a story that is by turns heartbreaking and hopeful; full of regret for the horrors of war and the pain its ripples cause, yet ultimately optimistic. Jones and Tom Ellis make for a naturalistic pairing, while Henshall commands the screen despite barely raising his voice an octave. Honourable mentions go to Iain De Caestecker and Maisie Williams in an excellent ensemble performance.

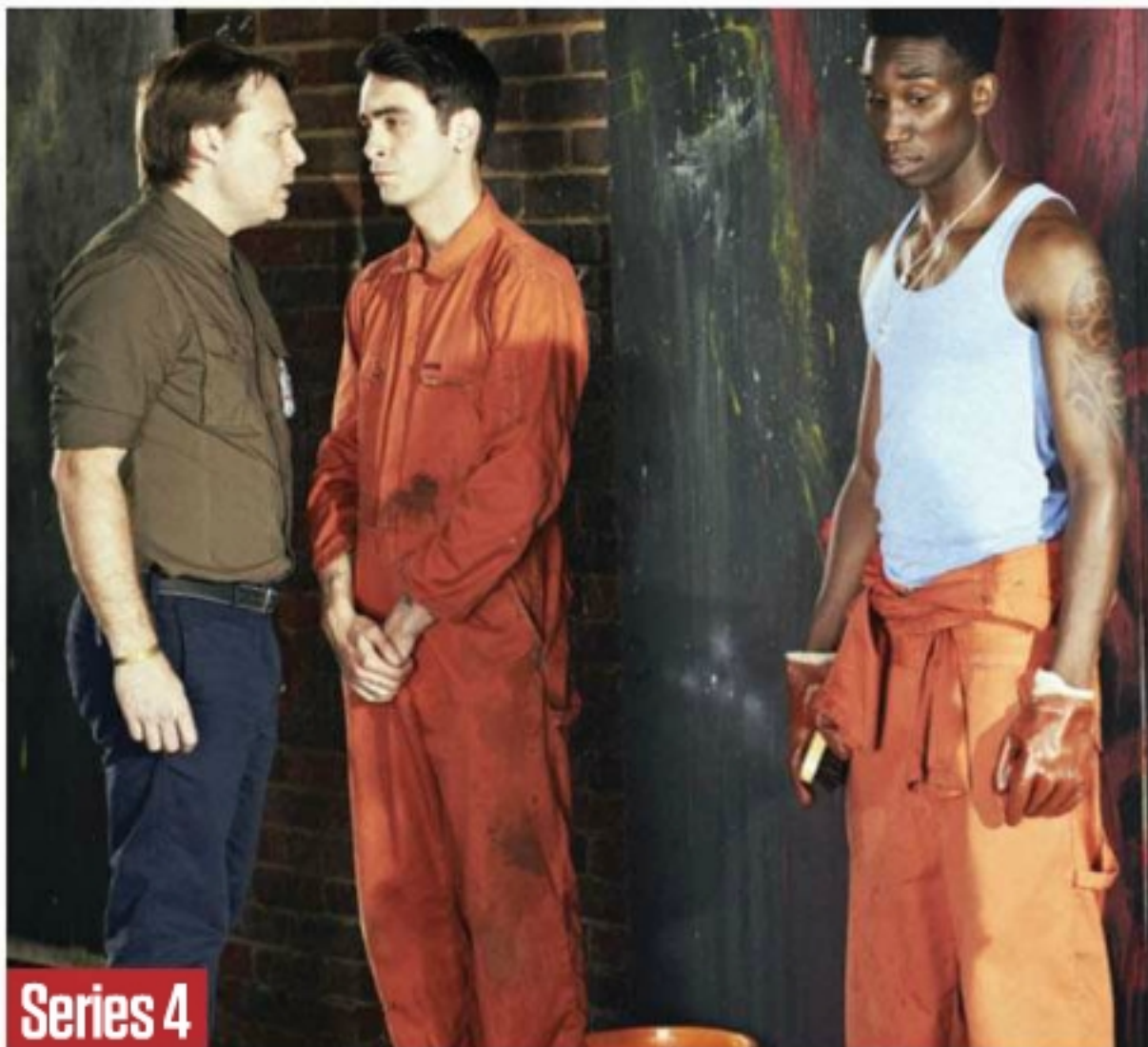
Deceptively tricky, *Crickley Hall* will keep you guessing while resisting falling into gimmickry. Most stories of this ilk quickly fade in the memory, but Joe Ahearne has done justice to Herbert's source material, and presents the case for more of it to receive similar treatment.

Steve Wright
SHOW ★★★★★ **EXTRAS** TBC

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Marchlands
A similarly impressive paranormal chiller across time. Makes for a great companion piece.



Series 4

MISFITS The power of community service

Details TBC // 360 mins // 2012 // **DVD** // £12.99 **Released** 26th December
Creator Howard Overman **Cast** Nathan Stewart-Jarrett, Joseph Gilgun, Karla Crome, Nathan McMullen, Matthew McNulty **Distributor** 4DVD **Extras** TBA



Nobody likes change, which is why bumping off three of *Misfits*' leads – who have been central to the show since its conception – will likely be met with scepticism by many.

Newbies Jess (Karla Crome) and Finn (Nathan McMullen) are initially difficult to warm to, though this is predominantly because the opening episode spends little time exploring either's personality, instead having them spend the duration attempting to slaughter each other.

But with perseverance, viewers will soon find more to the delinquent additions than simply foul mouths and heightened horniness – although the two still feature heavily. Rudy (Joseph Gilgun) remains as inappropriately hilarious as ever, the *This Is England* actor highlighting his versatility with a convincing portrayal of three conflicting versions of himself, while long-serving Curtis (Nathan Stewart-Jarrett) serves as a welcome reminder of the preceding series, although he doesn't feature as heavily or prominently as some might have hoped.

Adhering to conventions laid down previously, the storylines remain

ridiculously riveting, ratcheting up the death tolls massively and pushing the boundaries of believability beyond extreme – even after considering that it's based on superpowered ASBOs. That said, some of the borderline incestuous plotlines – notably one involving the hapless Finn – are perhaps a little much, even for the most accustomed of audiences. Similarly daft are some of the characters' gifts, significantly expanding the list of stupid superpowers to include telepathic communication with the aid of a dog.

Overall, it follows the same rude, crude and nude criteria as before; still being thoroughly enjoyable for fans, but remaining far from entertaining for anyone not previously amused by the series. Those wanting to try it for the first time, however, will find this to be the ideal opportunity, as the rapid deterioration of the original leads means that Series Four is a great introduction as well as a continuation.

Rowena Heal
SHOW ★★★★★ **EXTRAS** TBC

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Fades
 Paul doesn't cope well with seeing dead people, which makes *The Fades* both hilarious and terrifying.

SWITCH Series 1

The flatmates are total witches

Details TBA // 270 mins // 2012 // **DVD** // £17.00
Released 26th November 2012 **Creator** Philip Trethowan **Cast** Pheobe Fox, Hannah Tointon, Nina Toussaint-White, Lacey Turner **Distributor** ITV Studios Home Entertainment **Extras** TBC



You can see that ITV2 was aiming for a sort of supernatural *Sex In The City* in *Switch*, which depicts four young witches living in Camden, North London. But the brew turns out to be more 'Worst Witch: The Older Years'. It's not what you'd expect from a show airing at 10pm, and especially not the kind of clichéd fluff former *Being Human* producer Philip Trethowan would deliver.

The adult content seems wedged in with forced f-bombs, references to phone sex and a lightsaber vibrator gag – all in the second episode. Then, there's the lesbian ex that shows up and makes us want to look up a throttling spell. Like most of the



guest stars, she's written and played without an ounce of charm.

The sad thing is that this was the closest the show came to an actual villain, and the coven themselves have less characterisation than the cast of *Made In Chelsea*. Hardly bewitching telly, is it?

Mel Goodyear
SHOW ★★★★★ **EXTRAS** TBC

THE ALMIGHTY JOHNSONS Season 2

Avengers Assemble Kiwi-Style, apparently

Details 15 // 567 mins // 2012 // **DVD** // £15.99 **Released** Out Now **Creators** James Griffin, Rachel Lang **Cast** Emmett Skilton, Timothy Balme, Dean O'Gorman, Jared Turner, Ben Barrington **Distributor** Universal Pictures **Extras** TBC



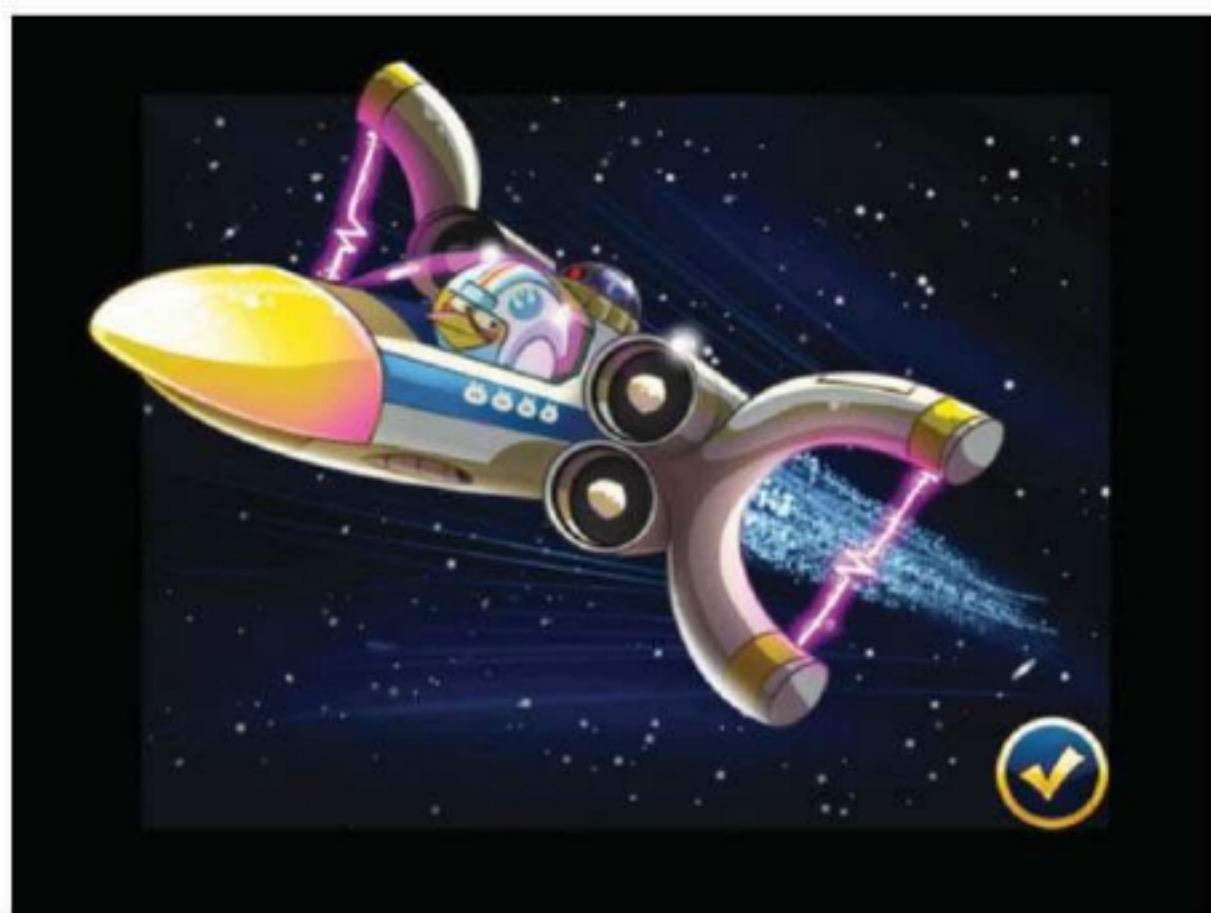
New Zealand's #TrueLad take on *Charmed* returns with a revelation: last year's baddie Agnetha (Alison Bruce) is really the Johnsons' missing mum. It's certainly dramatic and definitely disturbing, since Anders (Dean O'Gorman) was putting the moves on her, and she ordered her youngest, Axl (Emmett Skilton), to be killed. And how do the Johnsons deal with such a family crisis? Play mini golf, that's what.

Axl is still in search of his preordained soulmate, the goddess Frigg. Ty (Jared Turner) is grappling with his godly spirit, a newly divorced Mike (Timothy Balme) falls back



into his old debauched ways and Anders is literally phoning it in this season, having been away filming *The Hobbit*. The second season is a more consistent mix of dramedy, and they're beginning to tick the boxes of a solid supernatural soap, including the token body swap episode.

Tom Whittaker
SHOW ★★★★★ **EXTRAS** TBC



ANGRY BIRDS STAR WARS

Mace Wingdu

Format iOS, Android // **Age rating** 3+ // **Publisher** LucasArts/Rovio
Developer Rovio // **Players** 1 // **Released** Out now // **Price** £0.69 (iOS), Free (Android) // **Downloadable** iOS, Android



You're more likely to play *Angry Birds* than any other game we've ever reviewed

in SciFiNow. Let's face it, LucasArts were banking on that kind of probable statistic when the deal was signed to combine the biggest entertainment franchise of all time with the most commercially successful property of the moment. *Grim Fandango* this ain't.

The name pretty much sums up what you get for an inoffensive 69p: the classic *Angry Birds* mechanic of catapulting birds at environments in a bid to take out enemy pigs, only with an elaborate *Star Wars* theme. This



means you get birds shaped like Luke, Han, R2-D2 and many more, who each have different powers, like swinging a lightsaber in a circular radius or firing a stream of laser fire. It's a variation on *Angry Birds* that just about serves *Star Wars* well, with levels based on Tatooine, the Death Star and Dagobah, with more free ones coming soon, as well as sweet touches deployed through certain details, such as the classic *Star Wars* cross-wipe between levels.

The character designs are where we must put our critical, Simon Pegg hats on, however, as visually *Angry Birds* proves to be a poor match for *Star Wars*. Just because the designers popped Han Solo's jacket and a Harrison Ford wig on a bird or shaped the Death Star like a pig's head, it doesn't mean we're going to seal-clap at the results. It's not the ideal match for the saga that Lego was, for example, and on principle this falls firmly in the Yoda/Vodafone camp of our post-prequel fan depression at *Star Wars*' relentless marketing gimmickry.

Still, *Angry Birds Star Wars* is brilliant value and a model time-waster, but it deserves a contentious reception.

Samuel Roberts
VERDICT ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga
 Light, building block-based fun with a high amount of crossover appeal.



ASSASSIN'S CREED III

Horrible Histories

Format 360/PS3/PC // **Age rating** 18 // **Publisher** Ubisoft // **Developer** Ubisoft Montreal // **Players** 1-12 // **Released** Out now // **Price** £49.99
Downloadable PS3



Now on the same regular yearly release schedule as *Call Of Duty*, the JJ Abrams/Dan Brown-inspired *Assassin's Creed* series hits several creative highs with this ludicrously sized third main instalment.

After two watered-down franchise extensions in preceding years, this is a genuine sequel, with an Illuminati-style tale that stretches across past and present. Even if it lacks a little in terms of interactivity, the game's recreation of the American Revolution, alongside its intriguing alternate history premise is so impressively realised that it's worth admiring, if solely on an artistic level.

The same *Matrix*-style idea of a present-day man accessing his ancestor's memories stands – annoyingly, it's the 2012 end-of-the-world stuff that still drags the *Assassin's Creed* story down. Far more interesting is the tale of the half-English, half-Native American Connor, who despite having an origin tale stitched together from about a dozen Hollywood movies (particularly *The Last Of The Mohicans* and *Pathfinder*) is characterised pretty well as the only force that stands against the bad guys – the Templars – and world domination. Those nasty bastards

are searching for an artefact that can unlock the secret of 'those who came before' – the Apple Of Eden, which is the game's main MacGuffin.

OK, so the story is a bit *Bill & Ted* in its approach to history, but the setting is the star of *Assassin's Creed III*, anyway – old America is gigantically sized, with enough of a landmass along the Eastern coast to permit weeks of exploration by sea, horse or bounding through dense forests like some kind of scurvy-era superhero. What disappoints is that in what can be construed as a concession aimed at making the game more accessible, you only really need to hold one button to move through the entire world, as extravagant as the visuals and animations are.

This reduced interactivity is the main issue with the third *Assassin's Creed* instalment, even if the scale and detail of the backdrop never loses impact, and the narrative thread between two eras manages to just about hold together through the prolonged campaign.

Samuel Roberts
VERDICT ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare
 Explore old America while getting a world of hassle from the living dead.

GAME INFO

Released

Out now

Certificate

16

Format

Xbox 360

Publisher

Microsoft

Developer

343 Industries

Players

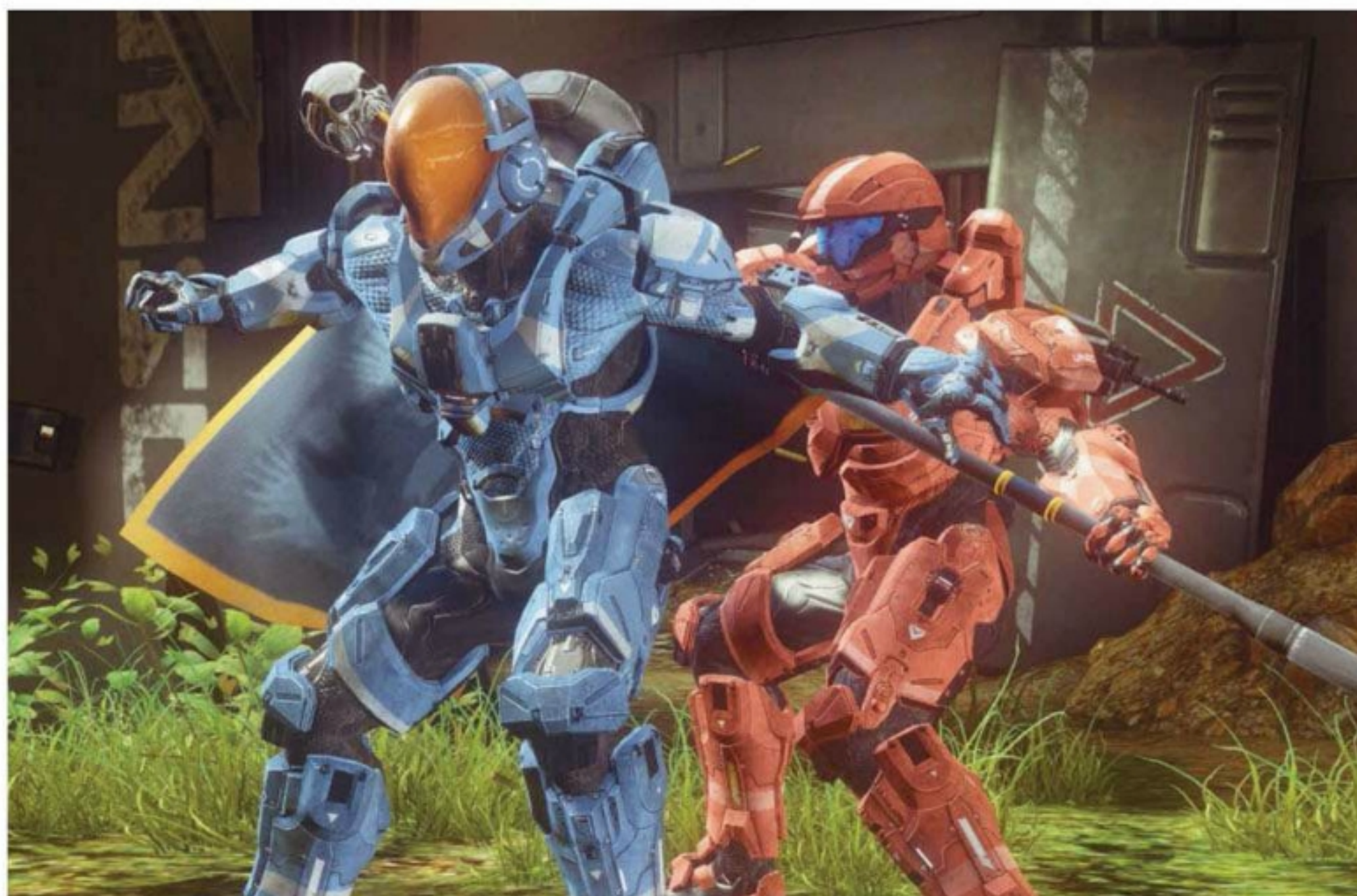
1-16

Price

£49.99

Downloadable

No



THE ARC OF THE COVENANT

Do I need to know anything about any of the previous games if I fancy jumping on now?

Not at all. *Halo 4* is set years after *Halo 3*, and immediately launches into the brand new 'Reclaimer' story arc, so you have the opportunity to be baffled by a whole new range of batshit mythology. Seriously, we've beaten every game and seen every cut-scene there is, but we didn't really know what was going on for a lot of the time.

Is that a problem, then?

Only for veterans of the series who have a disproportionate amount of enthusiasm for the mythos – the general arc is easy to follow, it's just that some of the terminology and details end up getting lost in the shuffle.

HALO 4

Chief concerns

Sci-Fi Now
Must play now!

Halo 4 is so stuffed with features that even jaded series fans will latch onto something. While its main story is disappointing in the context of previous strong campaigns, the first instalment from new franchise stewards 343 Industries has a wonderful cross-section of different experiences outside of that – the fourth *Halo* excels in refreshing and reconfiguring first-person shooter ideas we thought we were bored with.

Tackling the story part first, *Halo 4*'s campaign is largely derivative of previous entries, referencing their design in both subtle and blatant ways. While it's initially teased that the fundamentals of the series have been radically reinterpreted, with a brand new enemy in the Prometheans (vaguely confusing if you went to see *Prometheus* this year – there are even some story parallels), who operate alongside traditional comical *Halo* enemies The Covenant, this is still a well-worn template. Yes, battles are slightly different in their pacing and the Prometheans have their own cool sets of weaponry, but make no mistake: such features and slightly tweaked combat don't exactly count as an evolution of this formula.

That next step does come in the form of *Halo 4*'s visual presentation, however, which has stepped up since 2010's *Halo: Reach*, with certain levels maintaining the look of a matte painting in the rich way they're drawn. 343

tries to emulate the original *Halo*'s ability to induce wonder in the player through environmental design, creating sprawling worlds with remarkably intelligent visual touches that imply a history of the setting. Some levels are better in this regard than others, but in all cases we respect the effort and detail that has clearly been invested. Likewise, though the production values of the cut-scenes try to mask an all-round dull tale of Master Chief's pseudo-romance with Cortana (the little blue lady AI in his head) the conviction in which it's relayed is nonetheless impressive.

The campaign mode lacks set pieces of terrific pace or scale, with nothing comparing to the bafflingly sized climactic battles of *Halo* or the haunting city-glassing and space dogfights from *Reach*. Moreover, the vehicle sections are never as strong, and for us they're one of *Halo*'s main draws, while many of the mid-campaign levels devolve into structure-less slogs.

When your six hours with the campaign are over, though, a fuller experience kicks in. *Halo 4*'s multiplayer is as able as previous entries in creating gigantic sci-fi conflicts with myriad variables. With an excellent learning curve and inviting progression system, there's hundreds of hours to pour into the many well-constructed modes here.

Then there's Spartan Ops, *Halo*'s TV show-style deluge of extra missions, backed up by cut-scenes. The layout of these levels lack flair, as if they were knocked together by fans with a level creator tool, but team up with some pals and it equals an admirably aggressive burst of *Halo*-lite skirmish. They have the potential to improve as the schedule for each new episode rolls around, but for now they add yet another layer of value to *Halo 4*'s volley of stuff to do.

That's why *Halo* remains essential, really. The single-player mode might be nearing the ceiling of its creative potential – in this form, anyway – but *Halo* takes storytelling to other sectors with Spartan Ops, and multiplayer is tailored for a more diverse range of players than we're used to. It's a refined piece of work, and is still loads of fun compared to its contemporaries. 343 Industries has demonstrated that *Halo* is still relevant, and that innovation can work alongside the familiar.

Samuel Roberts

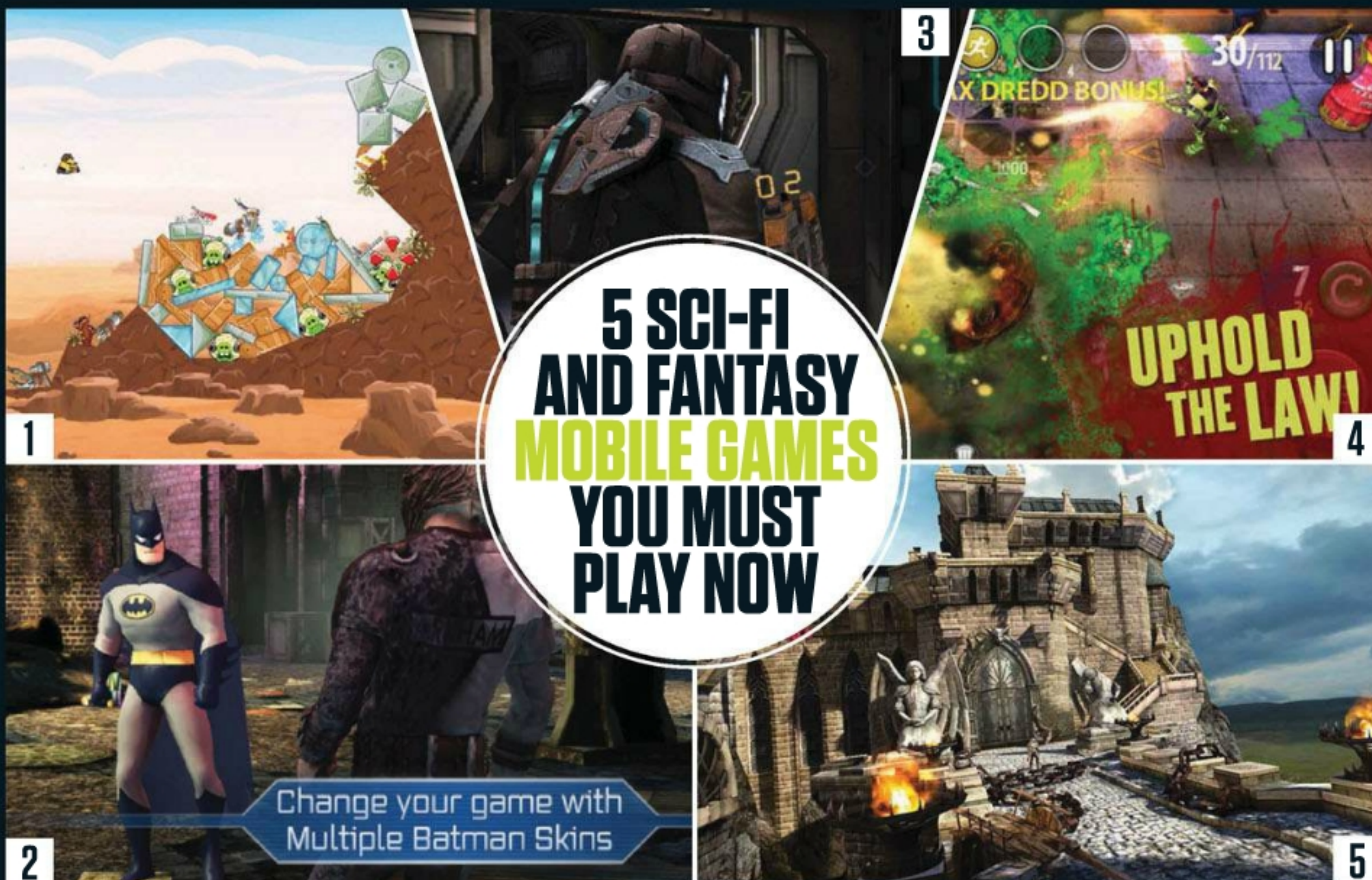
VERDICT ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Crysis 2

Dick about with a superpowered suit in New York while facing off against an alien invasion.



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Angry Birds Star Wars

AVAILABLE ON: IOS, ANDROID

1 Reviewed on the previous page, you can't help but be curious about *Angry Birds'* very unsexy cross-pollination with *Star Wars*, and it proves to be an enjoyable way to kill a few hours when you've got no other entertainment options. It's all fun and games until you use up your last level-clearing Millennium Falcon bonus and you're forced to fork out real life money on the game's arbitrary micro-transactions in order to buy more Falcons. It's still fun, though (with a healthy dose of cynicism)!

Batman: Arkham City Lockdown

AVAILABLE ON: IOS

2 Like a condensed version of the *Arkham City* on home consoles, this boils the action down to a series of satisfying fight sequences, where you use the touch controls to beat up Gotham's rogues' gallery. From the makers of *Mortal Kombat*, this has a lovely exclusive extra for those who cleared *Arkham City*: the presence of Deathstroke as a villain. A quick burst of Batman action that suits the mobile format – it may well be the best-looking title on IOS, too.

Dead Space

AVAILABLE ON: IOS, ANDROID

3 Easily the most successful attempt to transplant a console game onto a platform with primarily touchscreen-based controls, *Dead Space* encompasses all of the limb-slicing brutality of the console games with an intuitive interface. Perhaps most importantly, however, it matches the sense of *Alien*-style cautious wonder that comes with the series – that curiosity for seeing nasty things in derelict spaceship corridors. It also helps that the presentation is at near-console levels on tablet devices.

Judge Dredd Vs Zombies

AVAILABLE ON: IOS, ANDROID

4 Can't complain about this one, since at the current price of absolutely nothing you can slaughter endless waves of zombies with Judge Dredd's lawgiver. It also happens to be fantastically well-suited to touch controls, with gameplay towing the line between automated aiming and interactive blasting, while a smart credits system lets you watch adverts for social games in exchange for more money. A well-developed Dredd experience from Rebellion for the 2000 AD obsessive.

Infinity Blade

AVAILABLE ON: IOS

5 From the makers of Unreal technology, so you know it'll be a gorgeous display of what IOS devices can do. *Infinity Blade* has a sinister dark fantasy setting, whereby you're tasked with murdering an evil overlord – except you don't win the first time. Or the second. To add tragic emotional resonance, each time you fail you play as the son of your previous character – until your distant ancestor finally succeeds. While we enjoyed its sequel, the original beat-'em-up-framed slasher is a brilliant demonstration of fully fledged mobile software.

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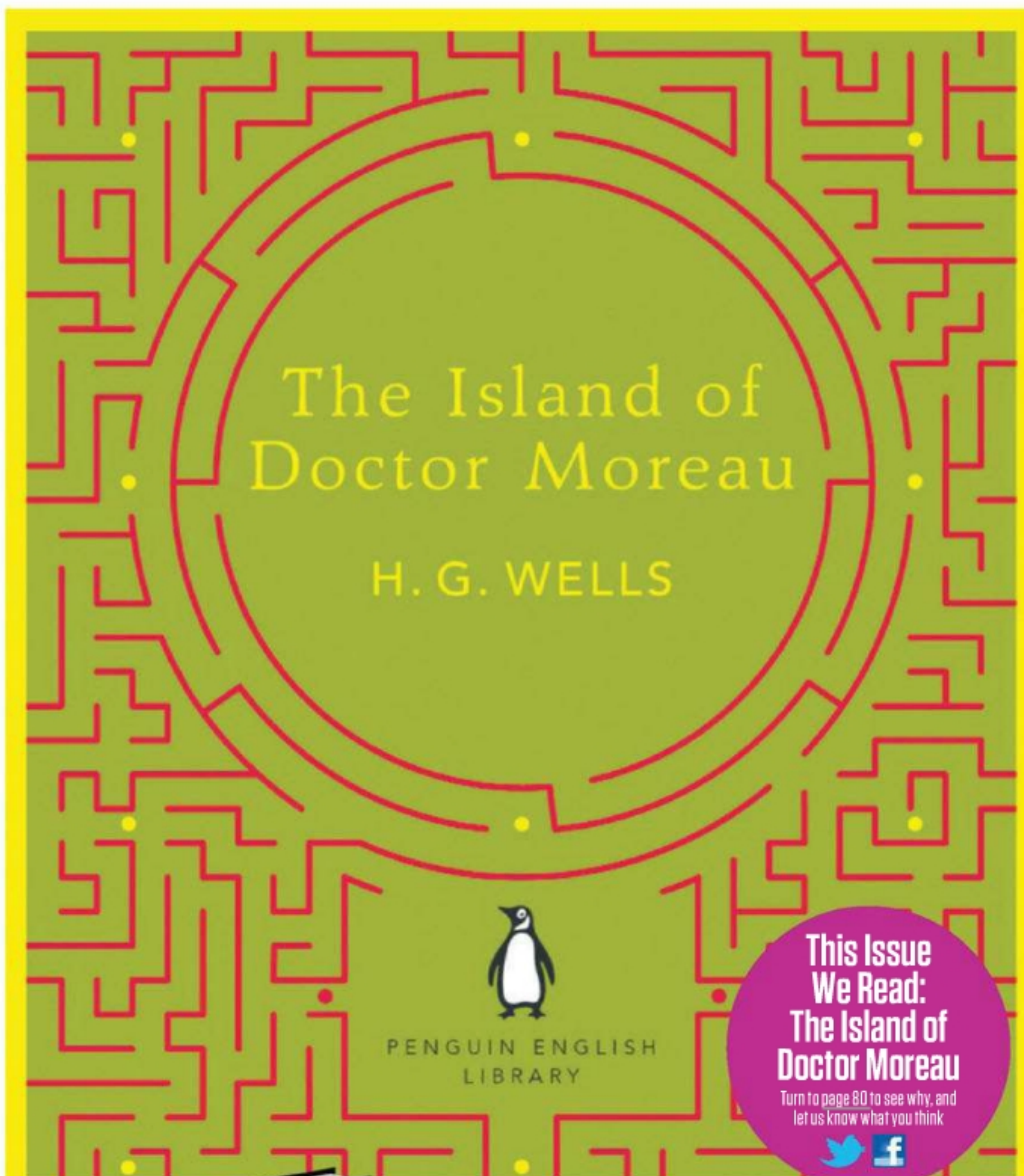
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ESSENTIAL READ: THE ISLAND OF DR MOREAU

HG WELLS: AUTHOR, SOCIALIST, SCIENTIST AND ADVOCATE OF EUGENICS. THE ISLAND OF DR MOREAU SHINES A LIGHT ON THE DARK SIDE OF SCIENCE FICTION'S MOST INFLUENTIAL MIND

WORDS MATTHEW HANDRAHAN



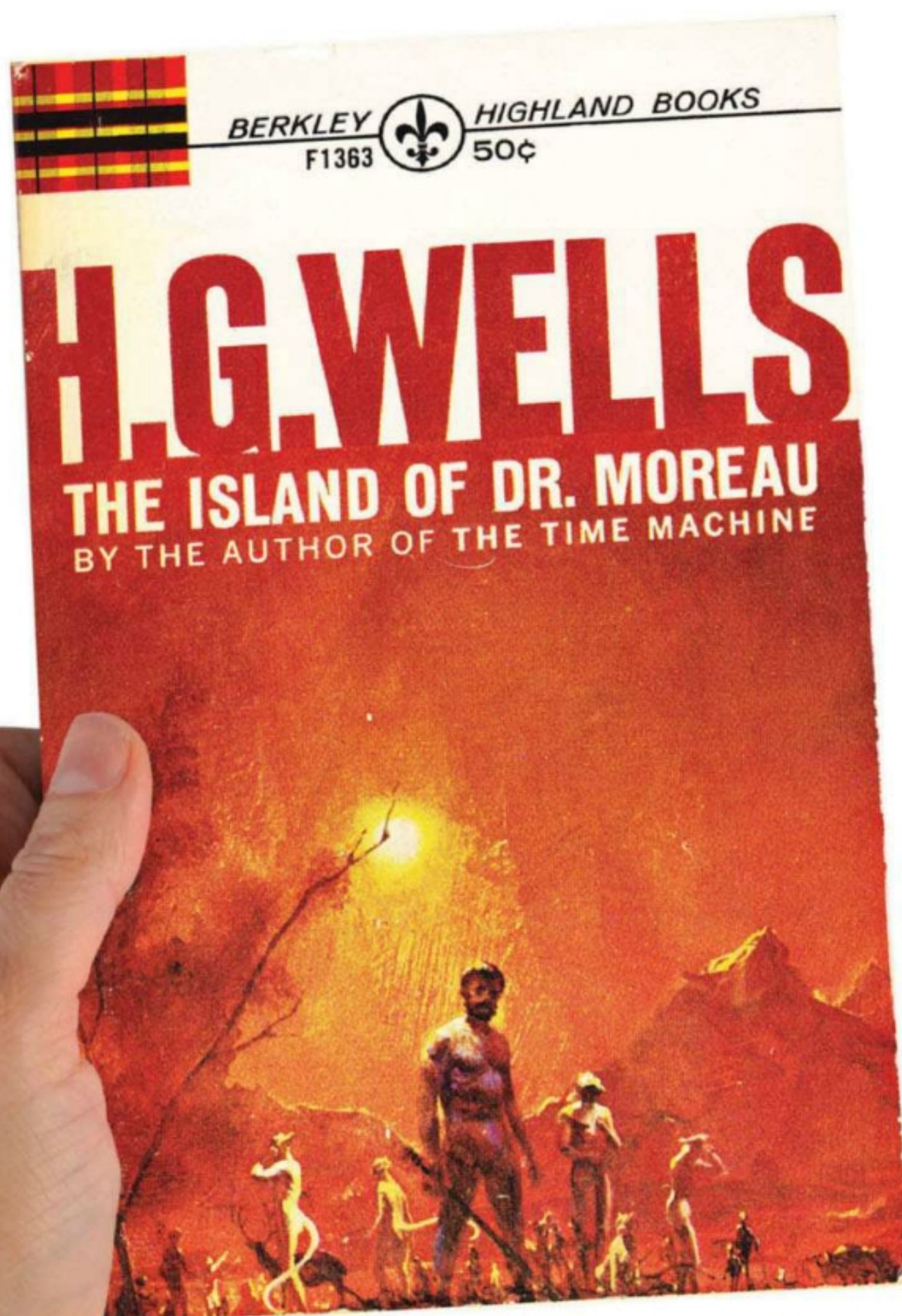
There is an intriguing story about HG Wells, one perfectly suited to proving his gift for scientific thought. Of

course, any story so poetic and pointed should generally be considered apocryphal, though that doesn't make it any less satisfying to hear.

In 1891, a relatively obscure writer called Hubert George Wells arrived at a meeting with Frank Harris, editor of the influential journal *Fortnightly Review*. Wells, late as usual, had been called in to explain his latest submission: an impenetrable essay called 'The Universe Rigid', which describes the universe as being composed of four dimensions; three spatial planes and time. About ten years later, a Swiss patent clerk called Albert Einstein would lay out his theory of Special Relativity, and the idea would find an audience.

Now, there's no doubt that Wells wrote 'The Universe Rigid', and it certainly contained musings on the nature of time, but the extent to which it can be compared to Einstein's world-changing theory is highly debatable. But that's not the point; the point is that HG Wells' virtually unparalleled work as an author of science fiction allows such a comparison to be entertained. In the public consciousness he occupies a similar plane to Einstein.

It's quite a feat, and there's justification for it even beyond his major novels. Born in 1866, the Britain of Wells' formative years was still deeply religious, and speaking out against the church was an act that took



SYNOPSIS

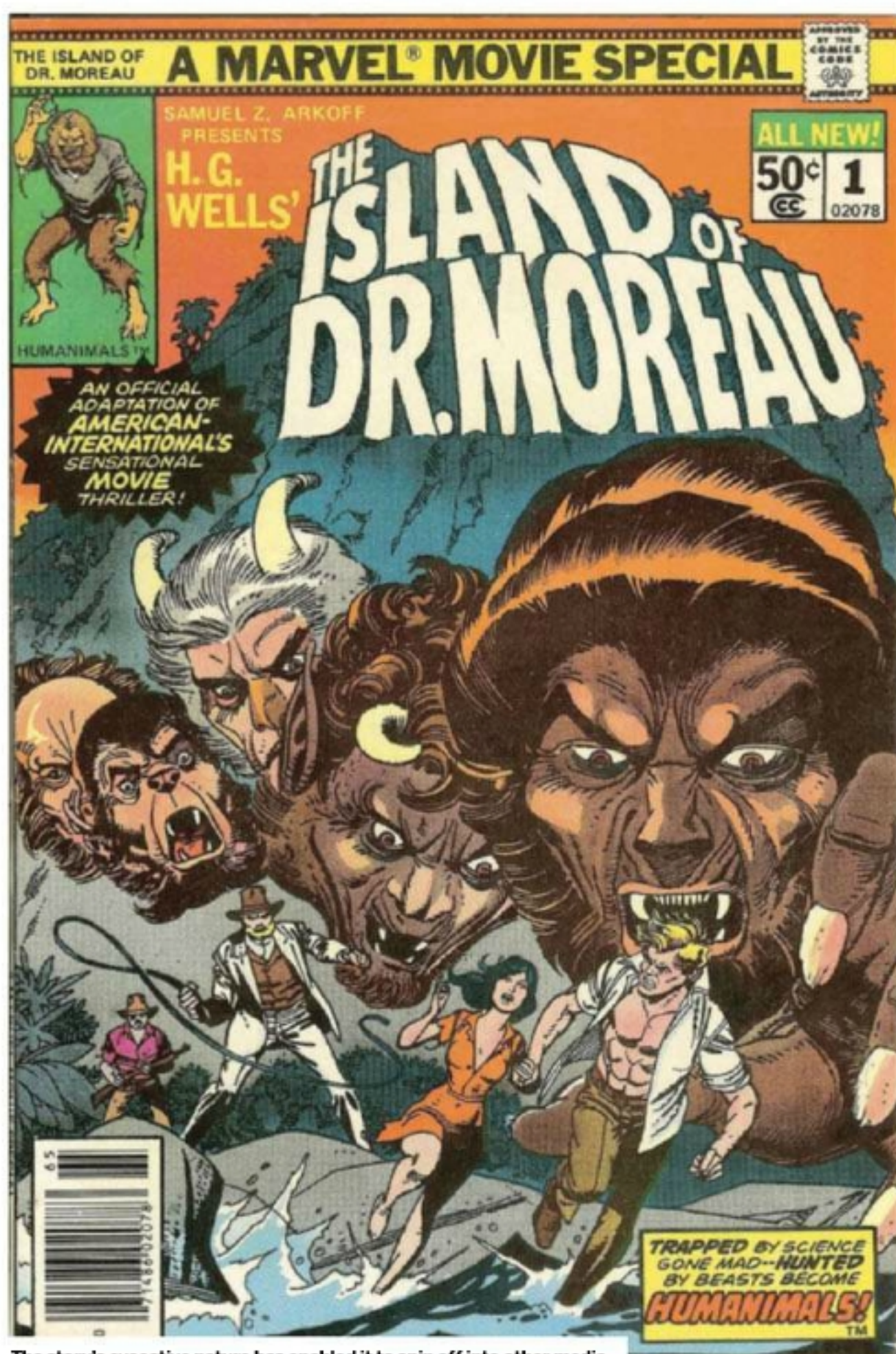


A shipwrecked Englishman, Edward Prendick, is saved by a passing ship bound for the nearby Noble's Isle. Prendick is intrigued to learn that the ship's cargo consists

of a menagerie of animals. Their destination? The private laboratory of Dr Moreau, a physiologist whose experiments in vivisection forced him into exile.

Forced to leave the ship at Noble's Isle, Prendick is disturbed to hear a puma's cries of pain as Moreau goes about his work. Retreating into the surrounding jungle, he discovers a group of humanoid creatures, before being attacked by a hybrid of a leopard and a man.

As Prendick begins to suspect that he is destined to end up under the knife, he discovers that Moreau's bestial offspring have a curious disdain for their animal side – and a near religious adulation of their creator.



The story's evocative nature has enabled it to spin off into other media.

"IT DOESN'T EVOKE SO MUCH AS DEMAND VISCERAL, SOCIAL, PHILOSOPHICAL DREAD" CHINA MIÉVILLE

a great deal of conviction. As a student at The Normal School of Science in Kensington in 1886, however, Wells found that conviction: Thomas Henry Huxley. One of the great scientific thinkers of the age, he was a prominent member of the school's faculty and Wells admired him greatly. Traces of Huxley can be seen in the characters in a number of Wells' stories, but at that time it was enough to have found something in which to believe: Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution.

In evolution, Wells saw an alternative to the ideas expressed in the Christian Bible: Genesis, the Fall and the fiery

climax described in Revelations. Darwin's theory made it all impossible, freeing mankind from its innate failings, its imposed destiny and the need to beg forgiveness every night. In short, it was seductive and empowering in a way that pushed many to extend the idea beyond its reasonable limits. Intellectuals like Wells turned to Darwin seeking a basis for morality beyond the widely accepted religious notions of right and wrong, and in searching they found one.

Those interested in evolutionary science at this time were especially interested in the idea of progress. Darwin may have

provided an alternative to God, but he also recast human beings as works in progress, and left no guarantee that our species would prosper. Indeed, Huxley's famous lecture 'Evolution and Ethics' suggested a future in which humanity would effectively degenerate – 'retrogressive metamorphosis' – and all life on Earth would become extinct. By the close of the 19th Century, the sun had started to set on the British Empire, but the arrogance that ruling two thirds of the globe can inspire was still in full force. A surprisingly large proportion of the intellectual and cultural elite saw no reason why humans shouldn't intervene in their own development, and interest in the highly dubious field of Eugenics began to grow.

Eugenics can be described as a blend of science and philosophy which advocates the supposed improvement of the human gene pool through selective breeding, as well as being innately tied to the controversial practice of vivisection. Wells was fascinated by the idea, and he wasn't alone: Winston Churchill, Theodore Roosevelt and George Bernard Shaw all publicly stated their interest in what Eugenics could achieve, and while it would be easy to assume that they simply hadn't yet witnessed the idea taken to its logical extreme – the Nazis' extensive program of ethnic cleansing during the Second World War – much of the literature produced around Eugenics at the start of the 20th Century is unpleasant at best, and utterly hateful at worst.

Wells was as guilty of that as anyone. He wrote extensively on the subject, most famously in his influential non-fiction work, *Anticipations* – or, to give its absurdly verbose full title, *Anticipations Of The Reaction Of Mechanical And Scientific Progress Upon Human Life And Thought*, which became an immediate bestseller. In it, Wells advocated, "the procreation of what is fine and efficient and beautiful in humanity – beautiful and strong bodies, clear and powerful minds... and to check the procreation of base and servile types... of all that is mean and ugly and bestial in the souls, bodies, or habits of men."

This would be achieved through the painless "mercy killings" of "unfit" people: those with contagious diseases, mental disorders, the criminally insane, alcoholics, people with "bodily deformations." There was also a racial aspect to Wells' vision of the future, where a "common language and a common rule" would need to be established.

"And for the rest, those swarms of black, and brown, and dirty-white, and yellow people, who do not come into the new needs of efficiency?" he wrote. ➤

5 Reasons to read... The Island Of Dr Moreau

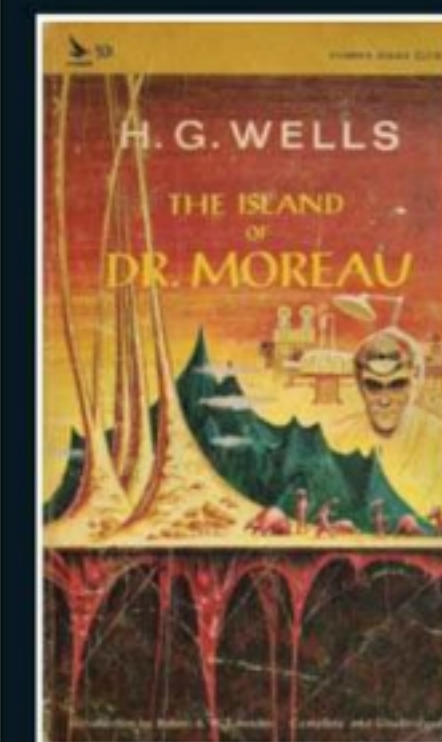
1 Well, it's HG Wells, the most important British author of science fiction in history. Actually, scratch that: the most important author of science fiction of any nationality. The genre as we understand it today can largely be traced back to Wells.

2 It's the connoisseur's choice. Most people reach for *The War Of The Worlds* or *The Invisible Man* when it comes to Wells, but reading *The Island Of Dr Moreau* indicates a deep interest in the extremes of Wells' imagination.

3 Have we mentioned how disquietingly weird it is? Wells is revered worldwide for his soaring imagination, but *The Island Of Dr Moreau*'s combination of reality, monstrosity and cool, distant prose is unique among his body of work.

4 All three attempts to turn the novel into a film have ranged between 'OK' and 'bloody awful', so there really is no other way to experience the story. Now, if only David Cronenberg would just give it a try...

5 It offers ample food for thought. The central character of Moreau is an enigma, both a celebration and a condemnation of the power of science. An understanding of Wells' personal politics only makes the novel even harder to fathom.



Your Take On The Classic

WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW



"It's one of my favourite books. Revolutionary in its ideals – prophesies

genetic engineering with unique foresight. #BookClub" @robbrichardson



"It's a fantastic novel. Would really like a faithful, decent, big screen adaptation.

#BookClub" @gmstringer



"#BookClub I have read it but a while ago. I did enjoy it and the questions it raises. Not

quite like the film with Marlon Brando!" @purplefrontier



"I love it! One of my favourites actually. Have yet to see a decent film version

though. #BookClub" @ejbarnes89



"Awesome! Especially when he lives alone with the animal people for a year. It's a short

book, so if you've got the time, it's a great read. #BookClub" @SkellaHomie



"Good, not his best work but good, why? Who is making a film of it now? #BookClub"

@mrrichpearson



"A very weird film about 20 years ago, humans crossed with animals. Think

HG had too much cheese and nightmares inspired the book. #BookClub" @alang4u



"I read it a while ago the story is creepy. I still mistrust all doctors/scientists..."

#BookClub" @morganstein12

What do you think? Let us know on Twitter or Facebook



No adaptation thus far has truly captured the true horror of Wells' novel.

"UNLIKE MANY CLASSICS, THE ISLAND OF DR MOREAU CAN BE RECOMMENDED WITH FEW QUALIFICATIONS"

"Well, the world is a world, not a charitable institution, and I take it they will have to go. The whole tenor and meaning of the world, as I see it, is that they have to go. So far as they fail to develop sane, vigorous, and distinctive personalities for the great world of the future, it is their portion to die out and disappear."

Wells described the appliance of Eugenics in this way as, "an ideal that will make killing worth the while," allowing humans to exert control over the "laws of evolution so that mankind could become their master rather than their victim."

It should be noted that Wells was also adamant that the desirable qualities that should be promoted were both complex and, to a degree, subjective. Indeed, during an address given by pioneering Eugenicist Francis Galton in 1904, he posited that contemporary scientific understanding was too crude to accurately identifying the traits necessary for "positive" Eugenics.

All of which would almost sound like reason, were it not for the fact that, in the very next breath, Wells restated his belief that negative Eugenic programmes could be implemented right away. "The way of nature has always been to slay the hindmost, and there is still no other way, unless we can prevent those who would become the hindmost being born," he said. "It is in the sterilisation of failures, and not in the selection of successes for breeding, that the possibility of an improvement of the human stock lies."

Of course, this all occurred several years after the astounding creative run that made Wells famous as an author of fiction – *The Time Machine*, *The Island Of Dr Moreau*, *The Invisible Man* and *The War Of The Worlds* were all published between 1895 and 1898 – but like all grand, complex ideas, he had been preoccupied with Eugenics for many years before he made his most public contributions to the

debate. The ultimate fate of humanity and the potential of the surgeon's knife as a gruesome guiding hand is a regular feature throughout his stories: there are seeds of the idea in *The Time Machine's* Morlocks and Eloi, but nowhere is it more apparent than in *The Island Of Dr Moreau*.

Unlike many classic works of science fiction, *The Island Of Dr Moreau* can be recommended with few qualifications. Even now it remains a profoundly strange work of fiction, narrated by its protagonist, Edward Prendick – the sort of ineffectual, heady aristocrat around which so many of Wells' stories are based – in a spare, matter-of-fact style that amplifies the ineffable weirdness of Dr Moreau's experiments.

Asked by *The Guardian* to select his favourite work of science fiction, the author China Miéville selected *The Island Of Dr Moreau*, describing it as, "saturated with wrongness... The critiques, contradictions and catastrophes in his fiction go further by far than those in his self-consciously political non-fiction."

This is a vital point in understanding Wells as an author. However abhorrent his sociological and political views may appear from the more sensitive climate of the 21st Century, and however strongly they are echoed in Moreau's quest to free animals

from their bestial nature, Wells never takes a clear position on his characters or their deeds. Like all great fiction, multiple and often contradictory readings are there for the taking, and what you see is almost certainly informed by your own prejudices rather than those of the author.

The Island Of Dr Moreau is a morally ambiguous book from a man whose own morals could have used a few more shades of grey. For example, Miéville regards it, as much as anything else, as an allegory for British colonialism. But does the narrative's headlong charge into death and disaster condemn the colonisers or the colonised? Certainly Wells never shies away from showing the pain Moreau causes, but he doesn't flinch from his creations giving in to their animal natures, either. Whatever can be said about Moreau's experiments – and it's worth noting that the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection was formed two years after the book's publication – Wells gives the character the sort of noble ideal he advocates in *Anticipations*, then watches as he hurtles towards failure.

However, if anything can be gleaned from the time in which *The Island Of Dr Moreau* was published, it's that the idea of progress was inextricably tied to the necessity of sacrifice. Ultimately, the practice of Eugenics is built upon that contradiction, and it's a practice that Wells personally endorsed. With that in mind, Moreau's experiments can be read as a reminder of mankind's supremacy in the natural world: Moreau attempts to cut their bestial weaknesses away; to raise them up to the level of human beings, who are described as "perfectly reasonable creatures, full of human desires and tender solicitude, emancipated from instinct, and slaves of no fantastic Law – being all together different from the Beast Folk."

That the experiments fail is certainly a comment on human arrogance, but it is also a comment on what we, as a species, have evolved beyond, and must continue to escape. Ultimately, the beast-folk cannot avoid their degeneration; they forget their primitive attempts to establish a civilised culture and turn on their creator, but the very fact that Moreau is capable of failing in this way raises him and his deeds far above the animals on which he operates.

Others may see it differently, but there is no definitive suggestion that Moreau's ideas are too dangerous or volatile to be of value – they are simply ill-conceived. For modern eyes, however, *The Island Of Dr Moreau* is an unintentional but timely reminder of an often overlooked truth: though science may be built on logic and reason, in the hands of extremists it is at least as dangerous as religion. ☞

Where Have I Seen This Before?

MANIFESTATIONS OF MONSTROSITY

THE TIME MACHINE ▶

Another masterpiece from Wells' incredibly prolific period in the late 19th Century, *The Time Machine* is revered for popularising the concept of time travel. However, in its conflict between the calm, ineffectual Eloi and the aggressive, brutish Morlocks, the story is laden with commentary on class and evolutionary science. Wells casts a withering eye over all, but there are uncomfortable echoes of his ideas about Eugenics.

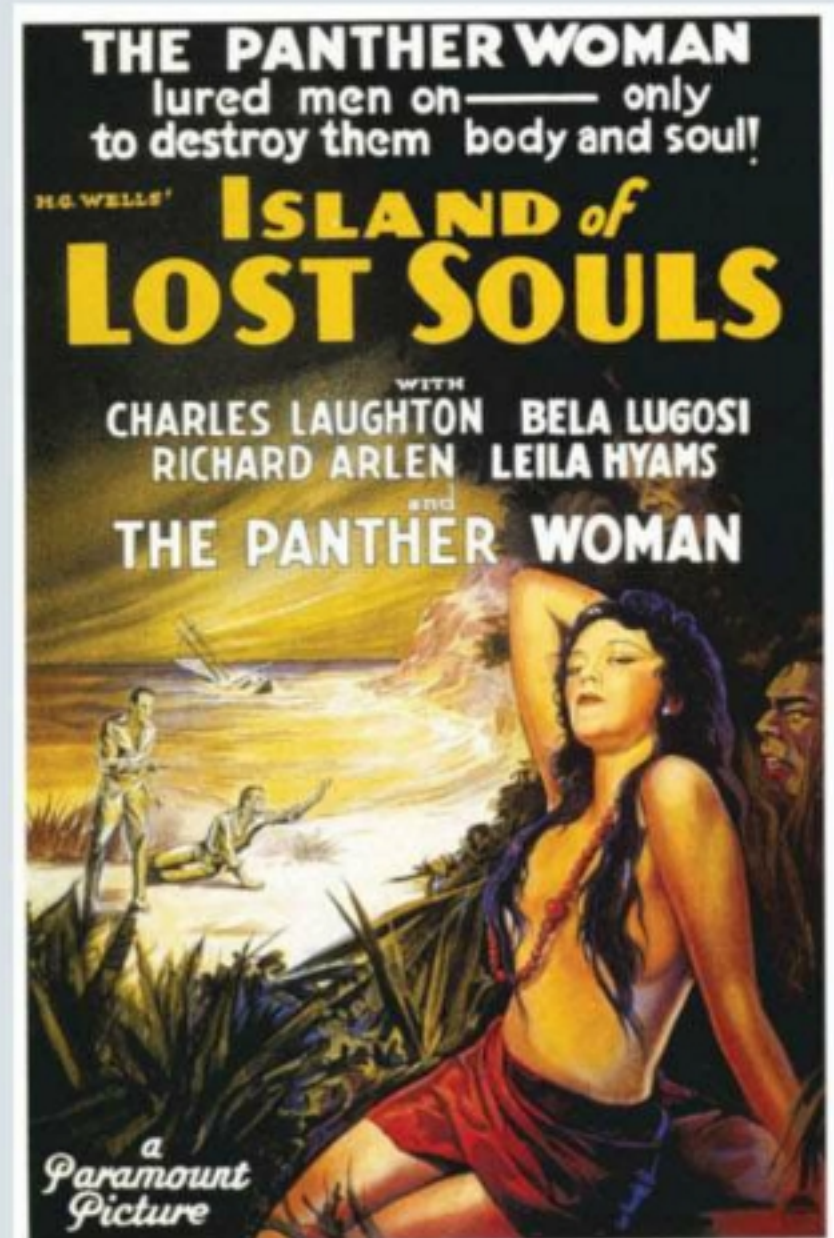


◀ JURASSIC PARK

Michael Crichton's hugely successful novel about a theme park populated with genetically engineered dinosaurs is very much in the mould of *The Island Of Dr Moreau* – not least because the human characters' arrogance comes back to bite them with huge, pointed teeth. Of course, Steven Spielberg's film adaptation is the reason why we all know the book, and with good reason: it's far more entertaining.

THE ISLAND OF DR MOREAU ▶

It is undoubtedly a wretched film, but there's a certain satisfaction to be gleaned in drawing parallels between the results of Moreau's horrific experiments and the equally horrific mess that this movie turned out to be. Frankly, it's more relevant as another regrettable footnote in Marlon Brando's inexorable decline than as an adaptation of Wells' classic, but it makes the book seem like an unqualified masterpiece.



THE ISLAND OF LOST SOULS ▲

Erle C Kenton's 1932 film was the first adaptation of Wells' novel, and almost certainly the best. Moreau is played by Charles Laughton, but despite shying away from the novel's most extreme creations, it was refused a certificate three times by the BBFC. An edited version was released with an X certificate in 1958; today, the original cut is rated PG.



◀ FRANKENSTEIN

There are few more influential books in any genre, but when searching for antecedents to Wells' tale of a mad scientist pushing science to unsettling extremes, Mary Shelley's classic story is both an obvious and inevitable choice. Indeed, the central ideas in *Frankenstein* are common in all of Wells' major novels, so its influence extends far beyond *The Island Of Dr Moreau*.



FRINGE ▲

Especially in Season Four of the sci-fi sensation, *Fringe's* technological terrorists become increasingly interested in the idea of engineering a super-race that will survive the coming catastrophe – and it turns out to be were-porcupines. The reference is hammered home by the inclusion of a supporting character called Conrad Moreau.



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO TANITH LEE

Confronting taboos since the Seventies **WORDS DANIEL CAIRNS**

In a market saturated with new vampire, sci-fi and fantasy fiction, you may be forgiven for dismissing the work of Tanith Lee as a bit old hat; her publishing debut was in 1971. Consider, though, that Lee was the first woman to win the British Fantasy Award, and preceded authors like Charlaine Harris with her brand of sexy dark fantasy, and you might be convinced to look beyond the lurid covers.

Lee has penned over 70 novels, 250 short stories, a children's picture book and two episodes of the cult sci-fi series, *Blake's 7*. She has publicly refused to be defined

by genres, believing there are only two in this world: fiction and non-fiction, but she's garnered a following that have followed her from sci-fi to gothic fantasy, and young adult to detective fiction.

Like all success stories, Lee endured several hardships before the big time. She was shunted from school to school because of her parents' jobs; they couldn't afford a TV until she was 12, and due to her dyslexia she wasn't able to read until she turned eight. She made up for lost time, though, and her first professional sale was 'Eustace', a 90-word vignette published when she was 21.

Much of Lee's work has been serialised, and she is perhaps best known for *The Flat Earth Cycle*, a volume of five adult fantasy novels. The personification of gods and demons in the mortal realm it depicts could have easily influenced Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* comic series, and another of her works displays a lot of similarities to Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga. Lee's tragic female vampire novel, *Sabella, Or The Blood Stone*, is a tale of 'vegetarian' vampires co-existing with humans while attempting to resist lustful temptations. We take you through some of her greatest hits...

Which author
would you like to
see tackled next?

Let us know on Twitter or Facebook



FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who is this Esther Garber person who keeps cropping up?

Esther Garber is, in fact, Lee's alter ego, a character of her own imagination who she channels when writing lesbian fiction. Lee first encountered Esther in a dream where she showed her a grave imprinted only with the number '34'. This acted as the inspiration for her first novel, *34*, to be written under her Garber pseudonym. *Fatal Women* and *Disturbed By Her Song* are also written under this moniker.

Is it true that she has a famous father?

Contrary to popular belief, Lee's dad is not the man you think. He is indeed called Bernard Lee, but he isn't the one known for his role as M in numerous James Bond films; her parents were, in fact, professional dancers (ballroom and Latin American, just in case you were wondering).

How do you lay your hands on these books? I've heard that many of them are out of print...

Don't panic; although a number of her works are out of print and can be hard to find outside of the internet or second-hand shops, help is at hand! Speciality publishers Norlana are currently negotiating reprints of various works under their TaLeKa imprint. A rare few are also available in eBook format.



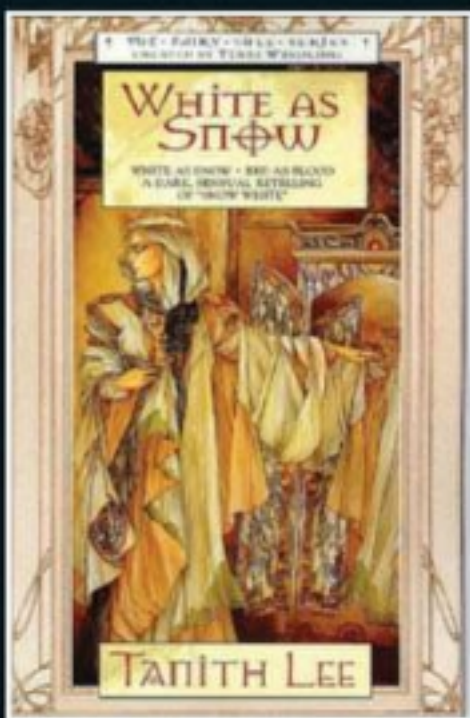
Things generally don't go well for the heroines in Lee's fictional output.



Thought *Snow White And The Huntsman* was dark? Think again...



Unlike Stephenie Meyer, Tanith Lee doesn't exactly do happy endings.

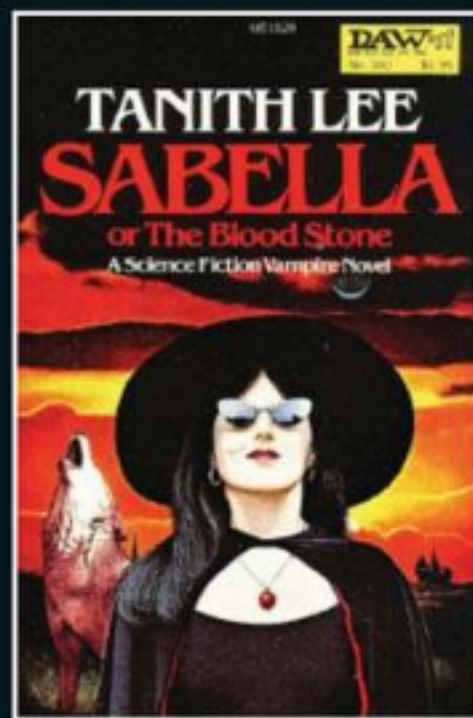


Mirror Mirror

...and they all lived not-so happily ever after

WHITE AS SNOW
 Publisher: Tor Books
 Published: 2000
 Price: £11.86
 A twisted and sinister take on Snow White with a hint of Greek mythology thrown in for good measure. Arpazia, the Wicked Queen, loses the plot after an evil warlord invades her home and rapes her. Nine months later, Coira (aka Snow White) arrives. By this time, Arpazia is unhappily married to the aforementioned warlord and has developed an unnatural obsession with a mirror. Understandably, she has no maternal feelings towards her daughter and hires a travelling side show to kill her. Enter our seven dwarves.

“I read *White As Snow*. It was great, yet gruesome. #BookClub”
 @HConvair

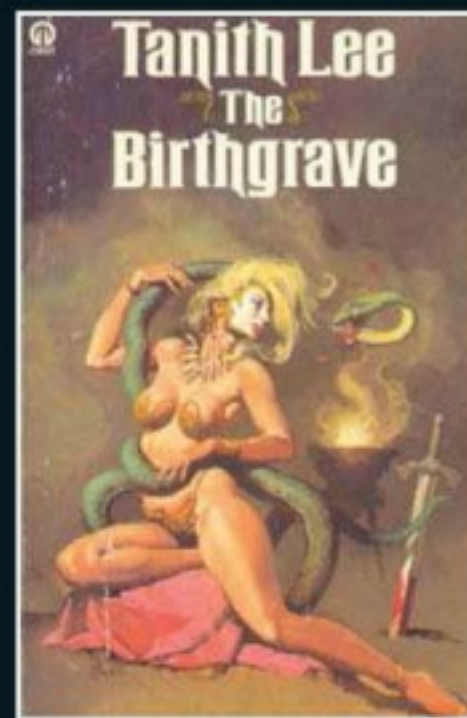


Hunter = the hunted

If *Twilight* was set in the Eighties

SABELLA, OR THE BLOOD STONE
 Publisher: DAW
 Published: 1980
 Price: Only available in US
 Sabella has been a bit of a minx in the past, and is now riddled with guilty memories of all the virile young men she devoured in her teenage bloodsucker years. These days she hangs out with the humans that colonise her home planet of Novo Mars and survives on a Cullen-like diet of animal blood. That is, until the delicious Sand shows up and pesters her into submission. Unfortunately – and inevitably for Sand – his persistence leads to a pretty sticky end, and Sand's brother shows up seeking retribution.

“Don't remember if I've read it, just an overall impression of her books: never read a bad one. #BookClub”
 @nealasher



Girl Power!

Amnesia can be a real bitch sometimes

THE BIRTHGRAVE
 Publisher: Norlana Books
 Published: 2010
 Price: £17.99
The Birthgrave is Lee's debut published novel and the first of an epic trilogy, followed by *Vazkor, Son Of Vazkor* and *Quest For The White Witch*. A nameless female wakes up in a dormant volcano with no memory of who she is. Before she has the chance to process this, a fire spirit appears informing her that she is the last of her kind, and unless she can unlock the secrets within herself, a curse of unhappiness will envelope the land. To further complicate proceedings, there are men – lots and lots of men!

“I read *The Birthgrave* long ago. It opened up my world. Girl nerds were non-persons back then. She woke me up from the dead. #BookClub”
 @TessEractica

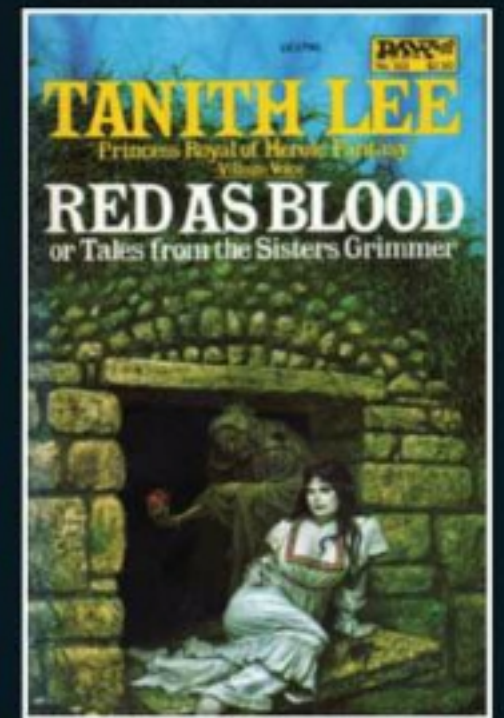


Utopian revolution

Life is limitless – try something new every day

BITING THE SUN
 Publisher: Bantam
 Published: 1999
 Price: £5.99
 In the city of Four-BEE, life can be lived to the full; there are no limits, boundaries or responsibilities – anything goes! Even death results in a new body, sometimes a new sex, age or form. Theft, sabotage and drug-taking is an everyday occurrence – until Lee's unnamed, sexless protagonist decides that enough is enough, and wants more from life. On a mission for substance and meaning, the system is challenged and a mini revolution born. Originally published as separate novels, *Biting The Sun* is a collection of the two.

“One of my all-time favourites. You're thrown into the middle of it and have to figure out what's going on. #BookClub”
 @AlexFayle



Acquired taste

Various dark fairy tale retellings

RED AS BLOOD, OR TALES FROM THE SISTERS GRIMMER
 Publisher: DAW
 Published: 1983
 Price: £6.99
 Challenge what you know and expect with this anthology of alternative fairy tales – happy endings are in short supply here. Lee sets each of her nine short stories in a variety of settings and time periods, ranging from the Pied Piper in Asia to arguably the most popular tale of Beauty (and the Beast) in the distant future. This collection has polarised readers; some judge the feminism as too blatant and gimmicky, while others have found the combination of feminism and evil a tad ambiguous.

“Tanith Lee's *Red As Blood* is a classic, must-read book. Wish I still had a copy. #BookClub”
 @JamesDKeith

Details Author: Ramez Naam Publisher: Angry Robot Price: £8.99

NEXUS

Technological hive mind hi-jinx

There's always a sense of trepidation about approaching someone's debut novel, especially when it's based largely around said debutant's previous (or current) line of work. There's a tendency for the writer to get bogged down in the details – more enamoured with their knowledge or the concepts and potential realities at play – often at the expense of a plot or engaging writing.

Ramez Naam was a professional technologist before he wrote *Nexus*, not to mention the CEO of his own nanotechnology company. He is also on the advisory board for the 'Institute of Accelerating Change' – clearly he knows what he's talking about, his pulse being firmly on the vein of progress. Can he craft a decent tale using what he knows, though?

He's given it a fair shake, and there's a good plot in here, but *Nexus*

is sometimes – and somewhat predictably – a bit of a dry read. It's full of interesting concepts and ramifications for a far off (or maybe not so far off) future, but it's written in such a pedestrian way.

"IT'S WRITTEN IN SUCH A BLAND AND MONOTONE WAY THAT IT'S EASY TO LOSE INTEREST"

The plot concerns a drug called Nexus that can cause human minds to meld together, birthing a hive mind. Some want to use the technology for good, and some for evil. Some want to improve it, while others want to get rid of it. One socially anxious scientist called Kade ends up improving it, modifying the nanotechnology

in such a way so as to appeal to the opposite sex. However, by doing this he attracts the attention of a nefarious secret organisation (they're almost always nefarious) who wish to use said nanotech for purposes less fun than

the odd bit of rumpy pumpy; namely assassination, espionage and other terrifying, society-threatening acts. Kade gets in over his head, leading to him attempting to quell the threat, and in the process meeting danger at every turn.

Conspiratorial cyber-thrillers are usually fairly engrossing, and Naam is genre-savvy enough to fill his book with twists, turns and scene-setting technological babble. The problem is that it's written in such a bland and monotone way that it's easy to lose interest during long stretches of reading, in part to Naam's insistence on using short, perfunctory sentences and some pretty iffy dialogue. In fairness, it is his debut novel, so he's not going to hit it out of the park straight away, but it's frustrating when reading through what's meant to be a spryly paced sequence that doesn't fizzle and crack off the page.

Naam has the real world knowledge and experience to write a gripping bit of hard sci-fi, and *Nexus* has its strengths. He successfully paints a picture of the world he wants to create and knows his way around a thriller, but Naam can't quite transfer the enthusiasm and experience he has for his subject to the page successfully just yet. He shows promise, though, and there's a lot to build on from here should he choose to embark on a follow up.

Daniel Cairns

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Diamond Age
Neal Stephenson
Another conspiratorial nanotech-infused cyber thriller, albeit from a more experienced author.



Your Five Sci-Fi Thrillers

CHOOSE YOUR TOP FIVE
@SCIFINOW ON TWITTER



1. Gridiron
Philip Kerr

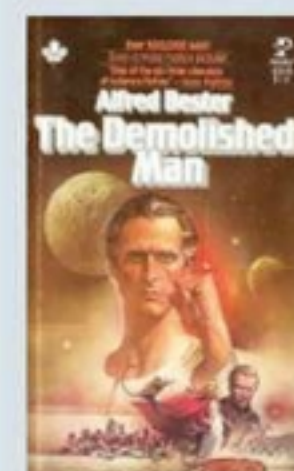
"Sentient building goes crazy and decides to kill everyone in it. Amazed it's not been filmed. #BookClub" @Zardo67



2. The Thing
Alan Dean Foster

"Strange to say but I loved ADF's adaptation of JC's *The Thing*. Read it several times #scifi #thrillers #BookClub"

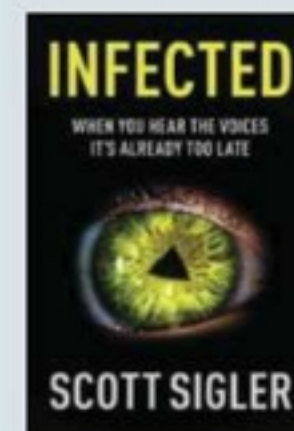
@wordsmagic2me



3. The Demolished Man
Alfred Bester

"*The Demolished Man*, wasn't by accident it won the inaugural Hugo award. Copper bottomed classic. #BookClub"

@THEBURNSUNIT999



4. Infected
Scott Sigler

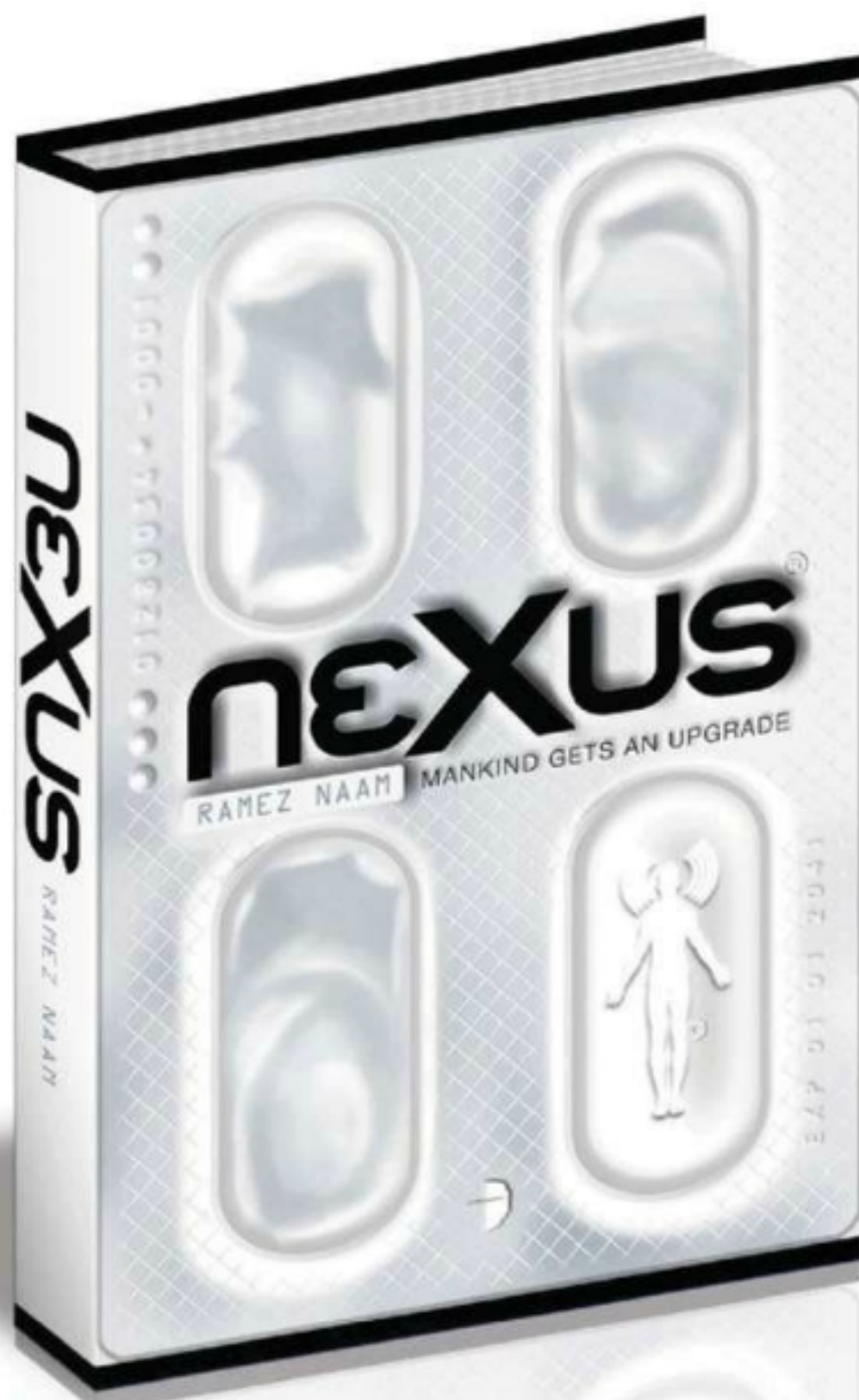
"It's one of those books that you just can't put down, good pace and good character depth... I've read it two or three times. #BookClub"

@rollin_scott



5. Flashforward
Robert J Sawyer

"*Flashforward* came out in 1999. There was a short run TV series, couldn't compare to the book. #BookClub" @JediSharon



Details Author: Andrew Fukuda Publisher: Simon & Schuster Price: £6.99

THE HUNT

When the sun sets... start running!

Winning the lottery is generally considered a good thing, but for Gene this is one jackpot he really didn't want to win. He is one of seven combatants selected at random to hunt humans, otherwise

known as 'hepers', but what his fellow hunters don't realise is that Gene is a heper himself.

For 17 years he has managed to survive in a world dominated by a vampire-like population who have consumed humans almost to extinction. Now, he has to work even harder to conceal his true identity before the hunter becomes the hunted.

Hot on the heels of *The Hunger Games*, there are clear comparisons to be made. What *The Hunt* does differently, however, is create an atmosphere of desperation and crushing defeat before the game even begins, which works in its favour.

Without ever really defining his vicious predators as vampires, Andrew Fukuda leaves the reader to assume their identity via familiar and stereotyped characteristics. In order to fit in with his school friends, Gene wears a set of

fangs he religiously sharpens each morning; sleep involves dangling from the ceiling in a set of 'sleep-holds'; sunlight is a killer and dinner must involve blood, guts, gore and more blood.

Fukuda also tackles things you always wanted to know: issues such as how do vampires really do the business? Would Ambre Solaire SPF 50 work if applied liberally? Can vampires get pissed up? Amid the nerve-jangling pages of this edgy and fast-paced read come the answers to such questions. Add to that a vein of romance and a few twists and turns that you can forgive for being a touch predictable, and the end result is an addictive and creepy novel.

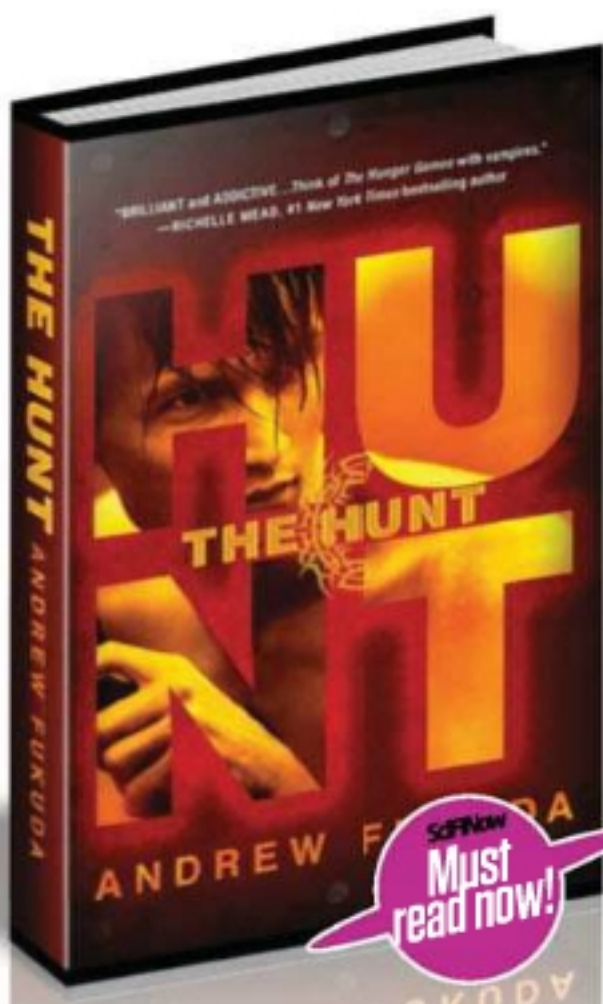
Claire Nicholls

VERDICT ★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Immortal Rules
Julie Kagawa
Vampires reign in a future where humans are registered and farmed like cattle.



Details Author: VM Zito Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton Price: £7.99

THE RETURN MAN

Zombies with brains

Author VM Zito has clearly done his homework. *The Return Man* marks a refreshing break from the mob of reptile-brained zombie hacks, offering something with more emotional depth than your standard flesh-tearing fest – which is fairly difficult to achieve.

Make no mistake: *The Return Man* is laced with adrenaline and was written with cinema in mind. And yes, there is a decapitation with crescent moon blades (last words: "cut 'em up"). In fact, the slowest part of the book is the scene where someone gets bounced off the bonnet of a *Mad Max*-modded quad, and that's only because it's told in bug-eyed slow motion. All the familiar tropes are there,

too, from ghost jams on the interstates to a militarised right-wing government, but it's the journey of Marco, the 'zombie hitman', that arrests your attention.

Searching for his wife, who disappeared during Z-Day, Marco hunts down walking corpses and 'returns' them to the grave – saving their souls by bringing them back into the life/death equation. Questions are raised about the respect owed to the dead that Zito fully embraces, while the resolution exposes a solid foundation for its more jarring aspects.

In an interview with website *The Founding Fields*, Zito said, "Writing *The Return Man* was like playing in a sandbox that



George Romero had built. The challenge was to sculpt something new." Well, he built a cathedral – and filled it with zombies.

Gavin Thomas

VERDICT ★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Closure, Limited
Max Brooks
An elusive company provides resolution for the families of those lost in World War Z.

YOUR READS

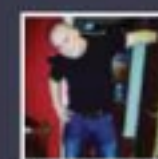
What you lot have been reading this month



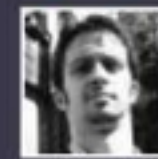
"*Ecko: Rising* by @danacea which is ace. Also *Critical Incident* by @Troyblackford, which is also ace. #BookClub" @AlasdairStuart



"I just finished the last of the *Laundry Files* by @cstross which were awesome, now re-reading Discworld titles, *Thief Of Time*. #BookClub" @JonnBlanchard



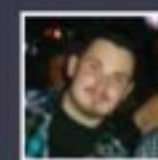
"*Assassin's Apprentice* by Robin Hobb and *The Iron Druid Chronicles* by @KevinHearne #BookClub" @Jon404



"Getting into James Herbert's *Once...* fairly slow, but think it's building to a bigger pace and events soon. Not bad... #BookClub" @ParsonsFiction



"I just finished *The Scar* by China Miéville and loved it! Sort-of-magic-sort-of-steampunk floating pirate city! #BookClub" @SaulPainter



"*A Dance With Dragons*, the hardest read out of the series so far, with all the intertwining stories! But still a great read! #BookClub" @jonquil_snow



"Just started *Second Foundation* by Isaac Asimov, it's already more refreshing than *Foundation & Empire*. #BookClub" @Villordsutch



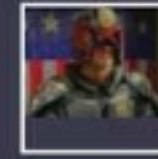
"I read Cronin's *The Twelve* (since I read *The Passage*) and Palahniuk's *Rant* (because @TheNorthlander told me to). #BookClub" @Davidsfunstuff



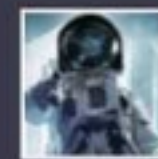
"Got Stephen King's *11.22.63*. Loving it so far! Also got *This Book Is Full Of Spiders*. #BookClub" @Richjlaw



"*Clockwork Angels* by Kevin J Anderson is a superb read based on song lyrics. #BookClub" @OpinionGeeks



"*A Dance With Dragons 1: Dreams And Dust* by George RR Martin. Nuff said. #BookClub" @adugg84



"I've been enjoying James Herbert's new book, *Ash*. Really creepy story, very disturbing. Herbert at his best! #BookClub" @paul_bowler

Tell us what you're reading on Twitter or Facebook  

Details Author: Saladin Ahmed Publisher: Daw Books Price: £12.99

THRONE OF THE CRESCENT MOON

Full of Eastern promise, but it's no delight!

When opening a new book and finding a map depicting a new world to explore, images of Narnia, Middle-Earth and Westeros spring to mind: iconic worlds where the reader frequently refers back to the map to feed the imagination further.

The map in *Throne Of The Crescent Moon* has all the trademarks of an epic new fantasy world: strangely named cities, a grand palace, an expanse of empty land, great seas and even a wall. Sadly, most of these places are not visited, with Ahmed instead focusing on a lengthy, repetitive and somewhat boring narrative that you could easily not bother reading yet still get the picture. What is of more appeal is the Middle Eastern setting, which helps to create an exotic, distant atmosphere.

In the meagre yet civilised city of Dhamsawaat, reluctant and aging ghul hunter Adoulla Makhslood is pondering retirement. Adoulla's dreams have become vivid and disturbing, and his last 'ghul'

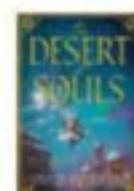
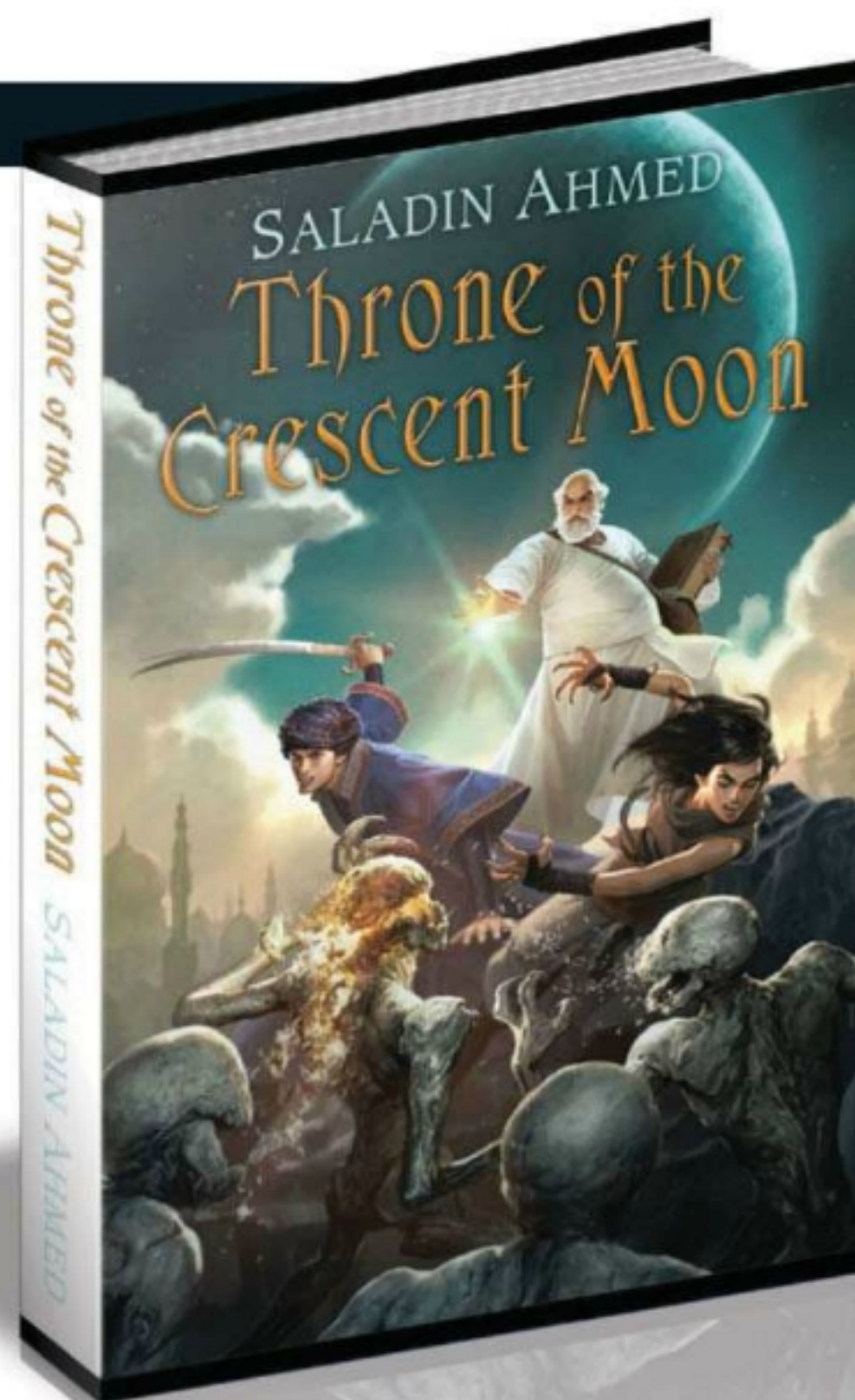
encounter required his young but pious assistant, Raseed, to come to his rescue. Before he has a chance to consider a bus pass, Adoulla is caught up in a quest to avenge the brutal slaying of an old flame's family. Learning of further supernatural murders along the way, he forms a band of magical friends to help him fight the evil threatening to steal the throne of the Crescent Moon from the tyrannical Khalif.

Saladin Ahmed's debut novel paves the way nicely for a succession of future stories with a number of characters and legends aching for depth and progression, the villains in particular being in need of development and more page time.

Throne Of The Crescent Moon is a tempting introduction to this new world if you can muster up the enthusiasm to plough through the slightly tedious prose and long-winded narrative.

Claire Nicholls

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Desert Of Souls

Howard Andrew Jones

An ancient Middle Eastern road trip leads to a legendary lost city, forbidden magic and a battle to save souls.

Details Author: Jude Fisher Publisher: Harper Collins Price: £12.99

THE HOBBIT: AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY VISUAL COMPANION

Returning readers to Isengard

Every journey needs a guide, and this companion offers an informative synopsis for novices of the JRR Tolkien novel, as well as an essential recap for fans to flick through before retrieving their pre-booked cinema tickets.

It's a handy who's who, with character profiles exploring the characters who are most likely to suffer in terms of screen time considering the abundance of leads. But the chances are that *Lord Of The Rings* fanatics won't unearth anything they don't already know after years of dedicated reading, so will instead seek solace in the impressive illustrations and map of Middle-Earth tucked neatly in the centre.

However, little beyond Martin Freeman's half-page



foreword reveals much about the movie itself, meaning that fans – of Tolkien, Jackson or both – will probably prefer to tackle Brian Sibley's *Official Movie Guide*.

Rowena Heal

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆

Details Author: Brian J Robb Publisher: Aurum Press Price: £25

STEAMPUNK: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF FANTASTICAL FICTION, FANCIFUL FILM AND OTHER VICTORIAN VISIONS

You've been Steampunk'd

Failing to leave a single steampunk stone unturned, this illustrated history traces the genre's evolution from the works of HG Wells to Gail Carriger's Alexia Tarabotti novels.

This book not only documents relevant examples of fiction; film, TV, comics and even videogames are explored, making it an essential read for anyone with a passion for the genre, regardless of the platform it's presented on.

Miles from simply being a coffee table decoration, it's a steampunk bible. It will be favoured by some to flick through to specific areas of interest, while others will instead prefer soaking up every trinket of trivia it contains.

Enthusiasts will love the illustrations, writer profiles and



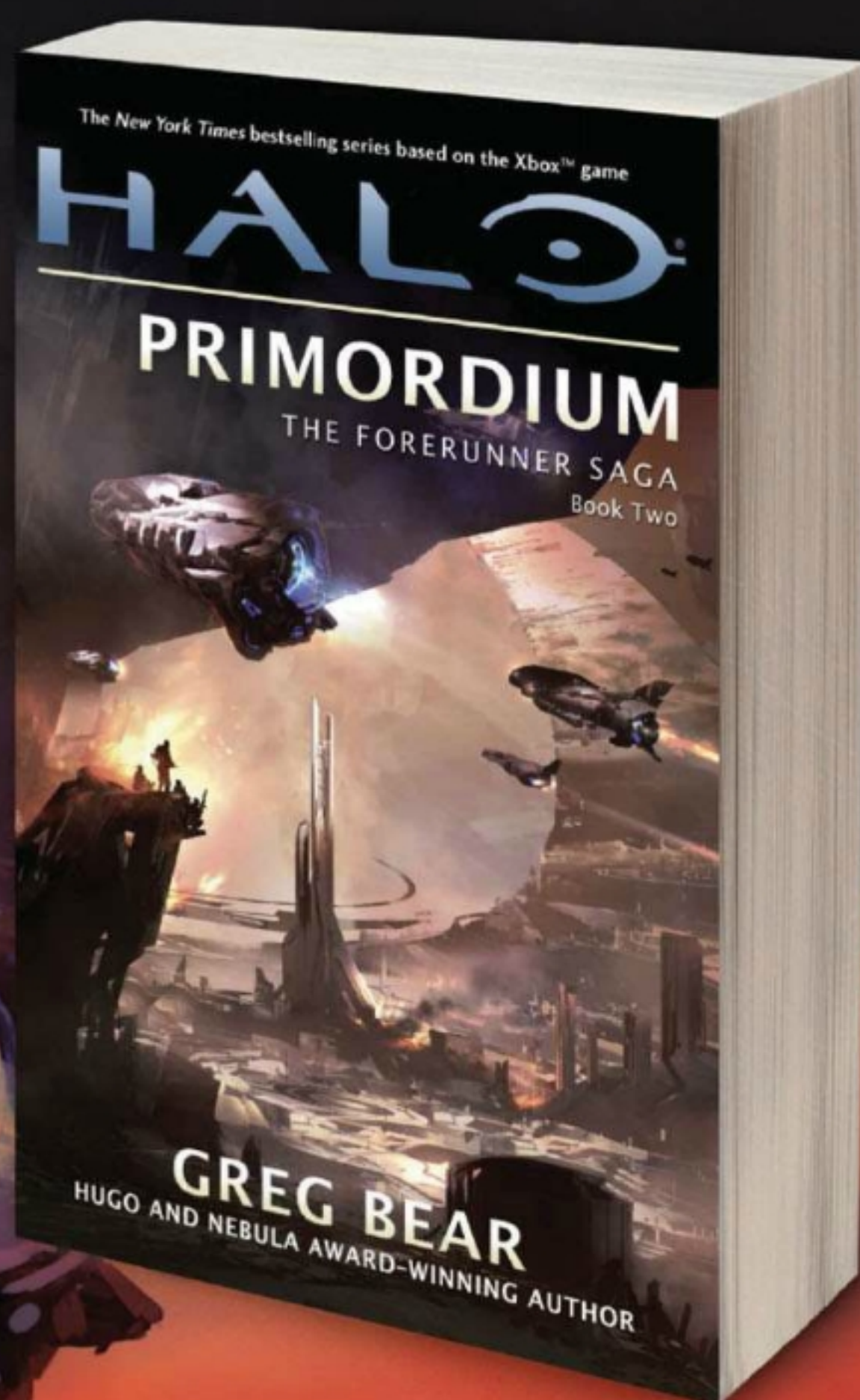
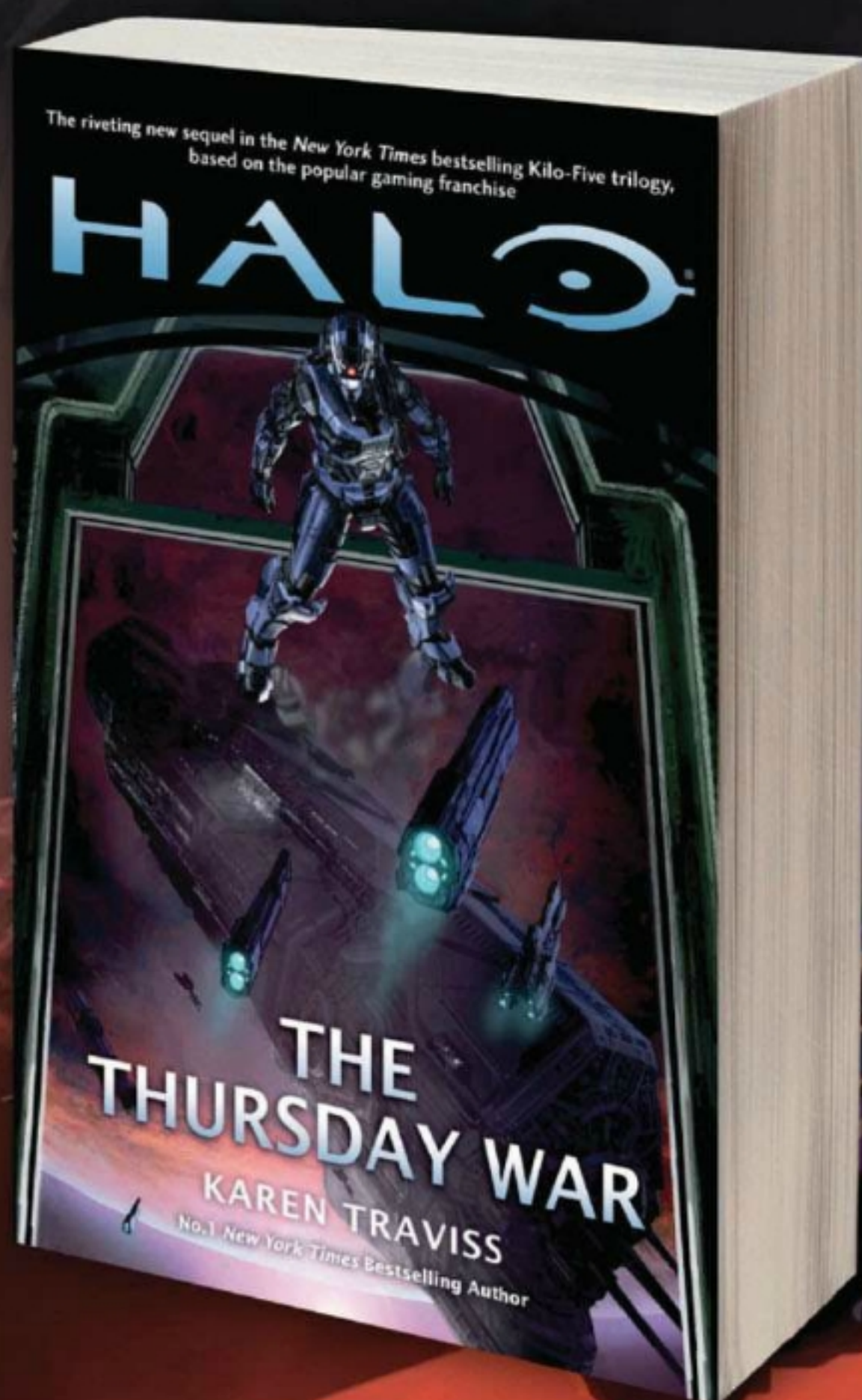
historical depth that author Brian J Robb has delved into, but the numerous text-heavy pages mean that a leisurely sift through isn't an option – this guide demands dedicated reading time in order to be enjoyed to its fullest extent.

Rowena Heal

VERDICT ★★★★★

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REVIEW ROUND UP

Doctor Who Audiobooks

LOVE AND WAR

Director: Gary Russell
Writer: Paul Cornell, adapted by Jacqueline Rayner
Cast: Sylvester McCoy, Sophie Aldred
Price: £14.99 (CD), £12.99 (download)

Sci-Fi Now
Must hear now!



Ably adapted by talented Big Finish regular Jacqueline Rayner from Paul Cornell's Virgin New Adventures series, *Love And War* uses the dynamic of 'old'

Doctor Who's closing series – the Doctor (Sylvester McCoy) largely leaves Ace (Sophie Aldred) to her own devices for much of the plot, withholding information and engineering people's reactions and choices in suitably inscrutable fashion – but drives straight through the stop sign that would have greeted such a bold televised story at the time.

Aldred, taking in fresh territory for the character, puts in a compelling performance, running from love to grief to rage and betrayal – the removal of some sub-plots placing even more emphasis on her eventual rejection of the Doctor and his wheels within wheels.

James Hoare

VERDICT ★★★★★

DARK EYES

Director: Nicholas Briggs
Writer: Nicholas Briggs
Cast: Paul McGann, Ruth Bradley, Peter Egan, Toby Jones
Price: £20 (CD), £20 (download)

Sci-Fi Now
Must hear now!



There's a definite case for *Dark Eyes* being the Eighth Doctor's *Revenge Of The Sith* – not because there's an unconvincing romance and a

spot of light genocide, but because there's a vivid end of innocence and a closing of the gap between the end of the Eighth Doctor and the dawn of the Ninth.

Primeval's Ruth Bradley has some big shoes to fill as companion Molly – replacing Sheridan Smith's Lucie – but here she represents a more challenging half of the duo, and her relevance to the unfolding conspiracy makes her a more equal partner.

It's abundantly clear to even the Big Finish novice that the McGann era of *Doctor Who* has a definite dramatic arc – as emotional and rewarding as anything on TV.

James Hoare

VERDICT ★★★★★

Details Author: Laura Lam Publisher: Strange Chemistry Price: £7.99

PANTOMIME

The circus of secrets

Although unlikely to grace your list of favourite reads, *Pantomime* remains riveting in its uniqueness. It's rare for Young Adult fiction to deal so overtly with topics like sexuality and gender identity, but author Laura Lam has weaved them into her fictional land of



Ellada well, in the process easing any awkwardness left by the less conventional choices of plotlines.

Micah and Iphigenia – names which need a phonetic accompaniment – are mysterious leads with problematic pasts. Their perspectives have been juxtaposed perfectly and their histories unravelled in a measured and ambiguous manner, while enough is revealed to keep us gripped. As the narrative progresses and their ties become more apparent, the ultimate twist is unexpected and surprising.

Lam has clearly dedicated a lot of time to conceiving Ellada, avoiding sporadic paragraphs of explanations by exploring its history through the more authentic use of museums, myths and school revision. In addition, her fictional extracts from Ellada texts – included at each chapter's intro – are an original touch that aid believability.

However, initially the narrative isn't particularly action-packed, so

those needing more than acrobats, clowns and debutante balls to keep them hooked should look elsewhere. It's actually the rather subdued tone that makes the whirlwind ending – complete with theft, pursuit and murder – shocking. The cliffhanger conclusion gives the impression of being bundled into too few pages, which will leave many frustrated by unanswered questions that can only point to a sequel.

As a coming of age tale, *Pantomime*'s great for teens, and many adults will appreciate Lam's well-imagined world too, but it will not hold the universal appeal attached to YA fiction like *The Hunger Games*.

Rowena Heal

VERDICT ★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Night Circus
Erin Morgenstern
Le Cirque des Rêves showcases more than just acrobats and fortune-tellers.

Details Author: Jim Butcher Publisher: Orbit Books Price: £16.99

COLD DAYS

The only way is Dresden

Supernatural detective

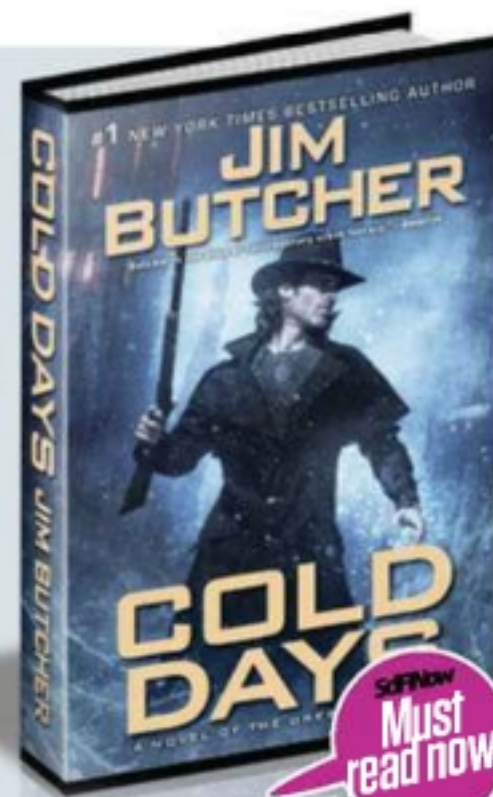
Harry Dresden wakes up being tended to by a nurse so beautiful it makes his head spin. His apartment is burned to the ground, his memories mostly scattered to the four winds and his life lying in ruins.

Oh, and he is in thrall to nightmarish faerie queen Mab, who spends the next 77 days trying to murder him. That's chapter one – we haven't even got to her asking Dresden to assassinate her daughter yet.

You don't make it to your 14th book without picking up a few tricks, and Jim Butcher's evergreen *Dresden Files* series is still in rude health. Harry Dresden is one of the most compelling protagonists in modern literature, and that's not just due to his rakish wit

and down-to-earth nature – it's his tendency to subvert fantasy tradition, within his own mythology or not. His internal monologue is rarely short of hilarious, but is also refreshingly modern (you'll struggle to find another fantasy book to feature the word 'vajazzle').

Dresden stays fresh because Butcher is always changing his enemies and locales, and *Cold Days* finds the loveable rogue having to deal with faerie traditions and the autocratic intrigue of the Winter Court. The supporting characters are equally good value, in particular new addition Cat Sith, a being so legendary and infamous that George Lucas stole his name for use in *Star Wars* – at least according to the character in the book.



Sci-Fi Now
Must read now!

By avoiding formula and creating a likeable central character, Jim Butcher seems to have guaranteed a potentially limitless lifespan for Harry Dresden. Here's to 14 more...

Gareth Hughes

VERDICT ★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Veteran
Gavin Smith
Jakob Douglas isn't as charming as Dresden, but he's just as quick-witted.

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where nothing is as it appears...

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Details Writer: Mark Andrew Smith **Artist:** James Stokoe
Publisher: Image Comics **Price:** £12.99

SULLIVAN'S SLUGGERS

Bottom of the ninth, and other baseball terminology we don't really understand

Sullivan's Sluggers caught

a lot of attention earlier this year for smashing through its target on Kickstarter – the idea of a baseball-horror graphic novel obviously capturing people's imagination. It's certainly a beautiful-looking project, if predictably throwaway, since it deliberately forms a pastiche of genre staples that are cheerfully exploited.

The titular Sullivan is a down-and-out, washed-up football coach who takes his team to a small town for one last chance at a win. When night-time comes, however, their opponents and the town's citizens transform into some fairly nasty monsters, and begin to pick the Sluggers off. Venturing to get out of the town, it turns into a bloodbath as they uncover the rather horrible secrets behind these creatures.

The character designs are extraordinarily detailed, and there's something of classic Seventies movie *The Warriors* in the flashy look of the players. *Sullivan's Sluggers* is part horror, part comedy – much of the story is based around *Beano*-style visual gags, and it is genuinely funny, if a swift read given how bare-bones the dialogue is (though it suits the type of story). What surprises is just how disgustingly bloody it is, with intestines making a frequent, soggy appearance, if that's your sort of horror.



It's just a comfortable homage to a number of film genres – notably the underdog sports story, zombie horror and buddy comedy. *Sullivan's Sluggers* isn't especially moving or memorable beyond its visual presentation, but the way it refreshes these types of stories makes it worthy of your attention.

Samuel Roberts

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Gladstone's School For World Conquerors
Mark Andrew Smith
 A fun, fresh take on a bunch of old supervillain-y ideas.



Details Authors: Clive Barker, Mark Miller **Artists:** Janusz Ordon, Jesus Hervas **Publisher:** Boom! Studios **Price:** £12.49

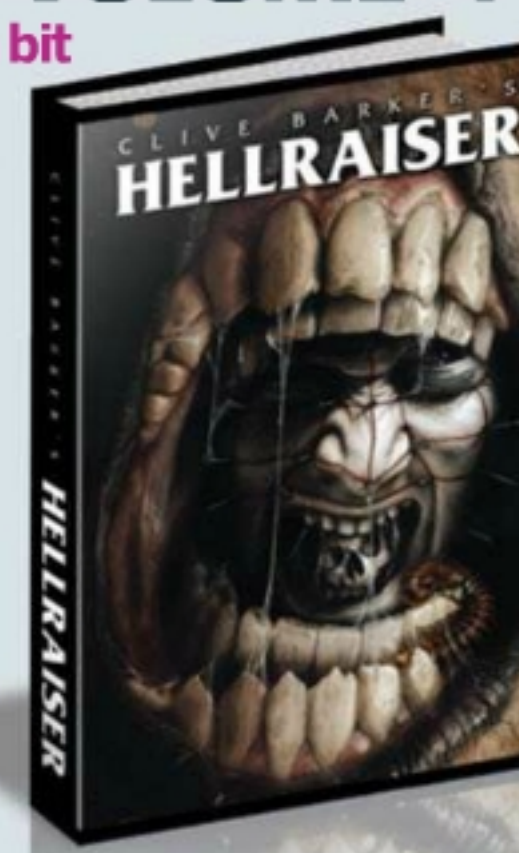
CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER VOLUME 4

Pinhead's scrubbed up a bit

Boom! Studios' new *Hellraiser* comic series has been something of an attempt to reclaim the series for the forces of good, so to speak. Compared to all the abominable *Hellraiser* movies since the comedy genius of *Hellraiser III: Hell On Earth* (which featured death by CD), it's certainly been a much more focused attempt at getting what could be a potent franchise back on form. It has been well drawn, and is full of the poetic flourishes associated with Clive Barker.

The plot thus far has seen Pinhead and Kirsty Cotton – the heroine from the original movie – trade places. In previous issues Pinhead complained of being tired of Hell, and the Machiavellian masochist manages to orchestrate things so that Kirsty takes his place, leading to Pinhead being sent back to Earth, apparently seeking salvation. However, Pinhead's not exactly been honest, thus creating a new dynamic as Kirsty and her new Cenobites attempt to save Earth.

Though it's well written and the art is good, something feels amiss, and compared to the tense earlier issues things have gone loopy. Iconic characters come out with



dialogue you wouldn't expect, and the scale goes supernova, with the Pentagon getting involved.

That said, this is still a fun series, and it's where fans of the acupuncture one should go for their kicks, especially considering the depths that the film series has fallen to.

Daniel Cairns

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Hellraiser Masterpieces Vol 1
Various
 Neil Gaiman and various other writers and artists have a go at tearing your soul apart.

Details Writer: Jim McCann Artists: Rodin Esquejo, Sonia Oback
Publisher: Image Comics **Price:** £7.50

MIND THE GAP VOL 1: INTIMATE STRANGERS

The hipster mysteries

A mystery set simultaneously in the real and supernatural world, *Mind The Gap* is an interesting yet limited whodunit. New Yorker Elle is brutally attacked, and subsequently falls into a coma. Soon, though, she finds herself as an out-of-body spirit looking onto reality from another place. As various people try to piece the mystery together while she lingers in her hospital bed, there's clearly something sinister at work, and Elle is forced to re-examine the minutiae of her existence in order to work out who has a motive for the assault. To reconnect with the real world, too, she has the ability to jump into dying bodies with her consciousness.

The 'gap' in the title refers to the space between life and death, which is already annoyingly smug, and we couldn't quite shake our perception that *Mind The Gap* thinks it's smarter than it actually is throughout reading this volume. The prominent use of song lyrics, a homage to the poster for *The Breakfast Club* and the general hipster-style self-obsession of the 'half-dead' main character add up to little more than forced idiosyncrasies, which is frustrating given how rich Rodin Esquejo's art is.

But the main problem is that the mystery doesn't connect until the second half of this arc, while Elle herself is strongly unlikeable – most of the characters here are spoilt rich kids, too, which makes it difficult to empathise with them. Sounds harsh, but in this story they're just absolutely irritating people who you wouldn't cross the road to save.



The character development of the nurse who's trying to uncover the truth behind the attack on Elle is conveyed well, but the mystery feels too confined to the same hospital bed, and the sense of intrigue wanes by the climax of this volume. Moreover, it's not until the fifth issue that the book starts to explain why you should give a crap about Elle's circle of friends – and as for Elle herself, being trapped inside her mind isn't nearly as fun or interesting as it should be. Disappointing, and a pale element in Image's recent creative renaissance.

Gordon Butler

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Phonogram: Rule Britannia
Kieron Gillen/Jamie McKelvie
 A genuinely smart indie book that uses music in a more creative way.



Details Writer: Mark Millar Artist: Leinil Yu Publisher: Titan Books Price: £14.99

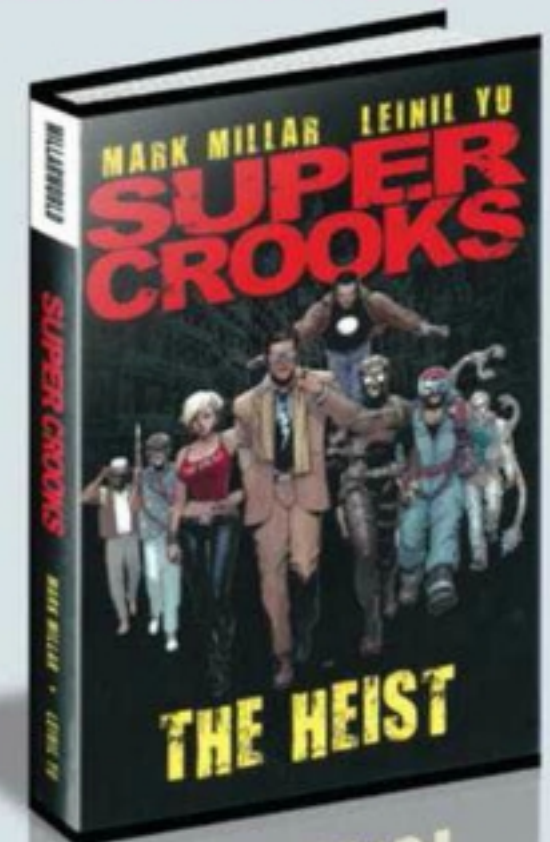
SUPERCROOKS

More Ocean's Thirteen than Ocean's Twelve

Is *Supercrooks* a graphic novel or a film pitch? Based on the fact that its film adaptation was touted before the individual issues were actually released, there's certainly an argument for both, and given how cinematically this post-*Kick-Ass* 'one last job' tale is presented, there's an intrusive sense of the creators having one eye on Hollywood that actually ends up supporting the book rather well.

After a scam goes wrong for ageing supervillain The Heat, his former buddies reunite to rob retired supercreek 'The Bastard'. It could feasibly be set in the same world as *Kick-Ass*, and the villains are dysfunctional in that *Ocean's Eleven* sort of throwaway fashion. They're all past their prime, and each have a different stake in the job that could bring the whole thing crashing down. You already know the premise, and you might even make a correct guess at what'll go wrong – but that's sort of the point.

Supercrooks is a straightforward heist comic underlined by elements we've come to see as Millar trademarks: flourishes of ultra-violence, colourful swearing and the idea that deconstructing a shallow story template is a heightened form of entertainment. That's what it is, but unlike Millar's other books, *Supercrooks* is just enjoyable; not extraordinary.



Leinil Yu's art is still industry-leading, however, and here he gets to experiment with character design. The collection of villains tow the line perfectly between plain-clothes wannabes and Silver Age-style backwash, and as such *Supercrooks* ends up being another ideal comic-book for fans – but with an intentionally broad appeal, too. It isn't a classic graphic novel, but it could be a fairly memorable movie.

Gordon Butler

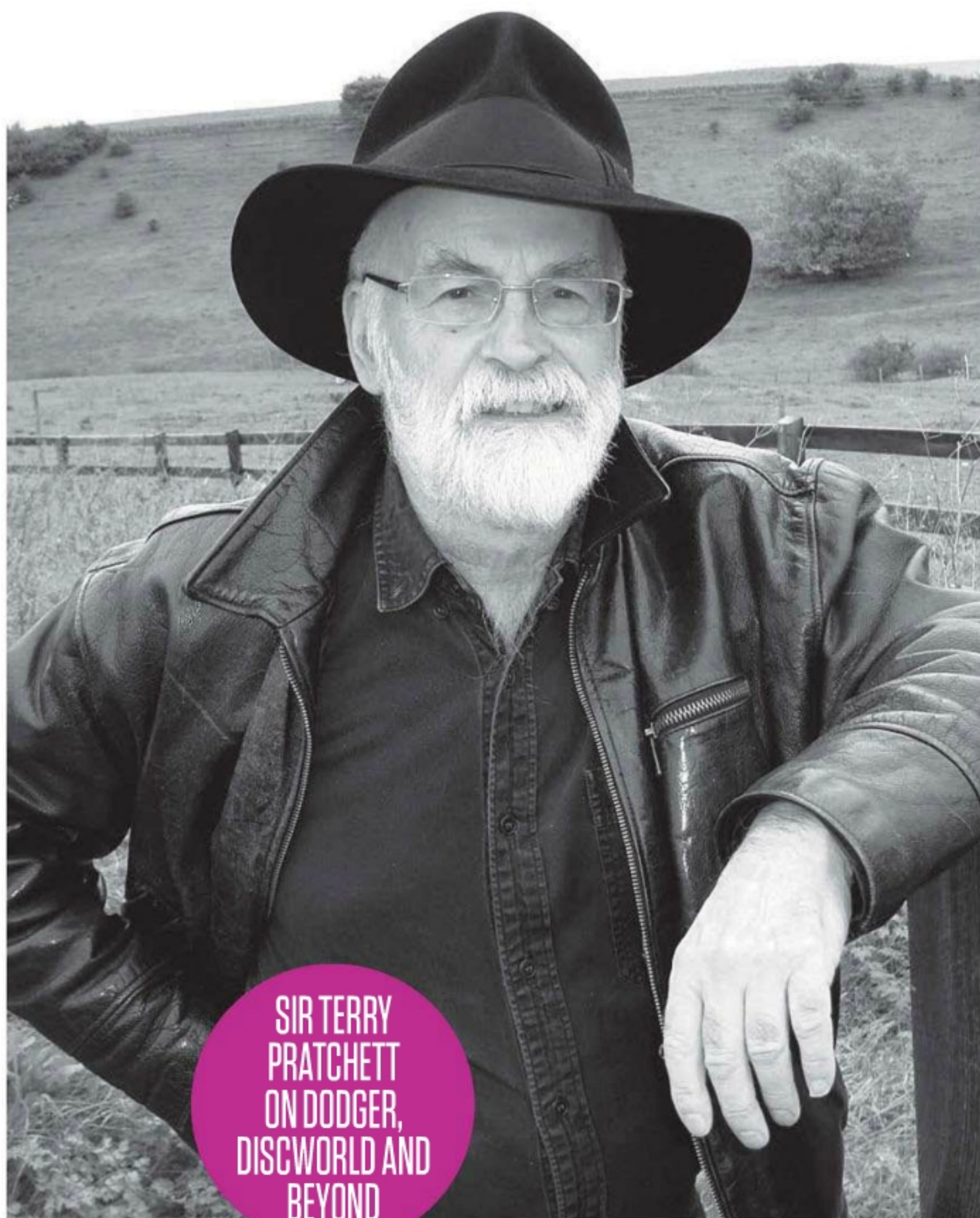
VERDICT ★★☆☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Thief Of Thieves
Robert Kirkman/Felix Serrano
 A Kirkman-branded thievery dramedy that's in the ballpark of *Supercrooks* quality.





SIR TERRY
PRATCHETT
ON DODGER,
DISCWORLD AND
BEYOND

Victorian Values

WORDS JOE NAZZARO

Terry Pratchett hasn't lost his ability to surprise. He may be one of the most successful authors in the world, but he's constantly in motion. It started on 3 October with the news that he was forming his own production company, Narrativa, which will produce a 13-part Discworld TV series called *The Watch*, as well as a four-part *Good Omens* miniseries based on the 1990 novel he authored with Neil Gaiman.

Though Discworld – now 39 novels thick – forms the bedrock of his career, his recent literary triumphs are more diverse. In 2012, Pratchett released a collection of short

fiction, *A Blink Of The Screen*, and escaped the swirling, pseudo-Victorian metropolis of Ankh-Morpork in favour of the very real – albeit with a dash of the unreal – Victorian London in *Dodger*. A 'historical fantasy' about a 17-year-old urchin who crosses paths with the likes of Charles Dickens and Benjamin Disraeli, it has garnered some of the best reviews of the author's career.

These little side trips, whether career-based or verbal, are all part of the deal when talking to Pratchett, who seems to relish keeping a journalist off-balance – a conversation about the computer software being used to write his books leads to a discussion about how that technology could be used to create a friendlier voice announcing which part of someone's home has just been broken into.

The historical underpinnings for *Dodger* had been percolating in the author's head for decades, ever since he first read Henry Mayhew's *London Labour And The London Poor* as a teen. "People today don't really understand how bad life was in early Victorian London," he claims. "The deprivation was horrible, and it was a very bad time to be old or poor, so the thought came into my mind, 'Let's pick a kid in early Victorian England who does all the things that *Dodger* does, but is actually the kid who gives Charles Dickens the idea for *Dodger*.'"

In Pratchett's novel, *Dodger* is a 17-year-old 'tosher' (a scavenger of the London sewers), who happens upon a woman in distress one night, and by defending her gets involved with some of the most powerful people of the time. His adventures also bring him into contact with such figures as Dickens, politician Disraeli and mad barber Sweeney Todd.

Bizarrely, most of the details fell together very easily. "Do you know the movie *Judge Roy Bean*?" he asks. "At the beginning of the movie it says, 'This is not how it was, but what it should have been.' I thought, 'Well, if you can get away with that, I will say that this is a fantasy based on a reality.' The toshers were real, for example, and while I had to check a few things every now and again, it was comparatively easy to do."

But how enthusiastic were the author's publishers about the notion of a non-Discworld book? Fortunately, those waters had already been tested with his 2008 novel *Nation*, which was met with some critical success. "It did incredibly well, and when *Dodger* came out it was number one for a long time in England and got some rave reviews, so they understand now.

"Every so often I'll give them another Discworld book...but you can't just do Discworld. Sometimes you have to go into some other milieu."

Pratchett pauses for a moment. "Do you know the meaning of the word 'lagniappe'?"

© Rob Wilkins

Or are you aware of the concept of luck money?" Lagniappe, he explains, is the concept of giving something you don't have to – like when you were a kid buying a dozen gobstoppers, the shop owner might add an extra one. Back in the day, when a vendor could be jailed for short-changing, it made sense to throw in a bit extra to be on the safe side. "Are you familiar with the Irish word 'craic'? It means, 'for the fun,' or merely because it's a good idea. Lagniappe has the same feel to it: that little extra."

Asked what any of this has to do with the story of *Dodger*, Pratchett grins mischievously. "None!" he responds. "Every now and then I check to see if people know it. With me, it's always about the side roads."

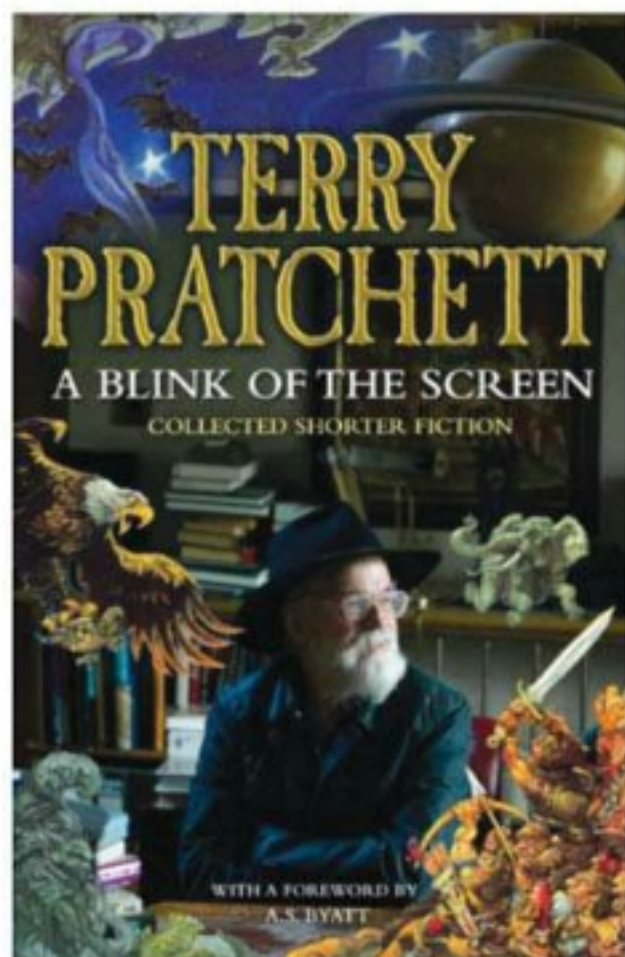
While readers are already clamouring for a sequel (more about that in a moment), Pratchett has plenty of other work to keep him busy, starting with his half of the sequel to *The Long Earth* with Stephen Baxter. "Most of it is done, but as everyone knows, much of the work is done in the second draft... that's awaiting me right now."

"Also lying there, almost to the point where it's ready for its second draft, is the next Discworld book, the title of which I don't intend to tell you. But it had to happen, and doing it opens up a lot of possibilities."

Not surprisingly, a follow-up to *Dodger* is on the cards, too. "I fell in love with the character," Pratchett admits, "especially when he was talking to Queen Victoria, and I liked the fact that scene made many people look up Onan in the Bible."

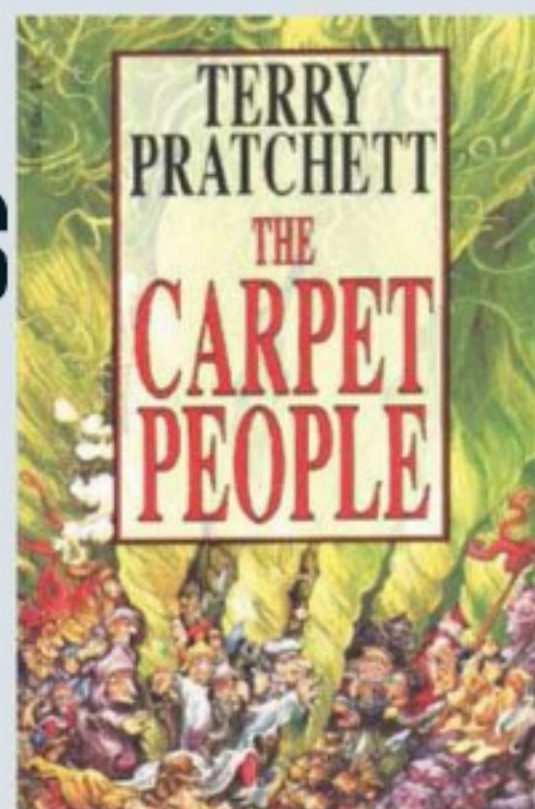
"There is plenty of material out there... at the end of the first book he's a secret agent, so I suppose you could say he's Sean Connery's granddad – he's a forerunner of James Bond. I rather like that!"

Dodger and *A Blink Of The Screen* are both available to buy now, priced at £18.99 and £20 respectively.



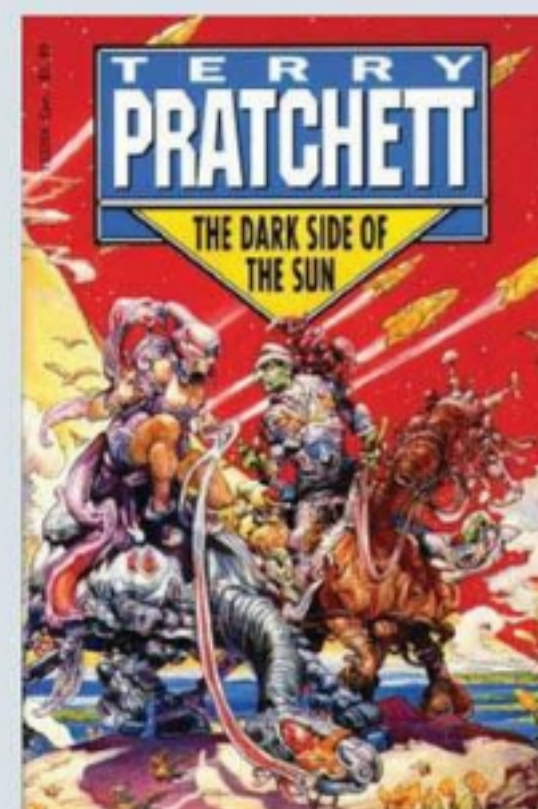
Terry Pratchett's Breakout Books

A TIMELINE OF HIS NOVELS THAT WENT AGAINST TYPE, THESE ARE THE BOOKS THAT BROKE OUT OF THE DISCWORLD...



THE CARPET PEOPLE 1971

Entire civilisations exist right beneath your feet, lurking in the carpets.



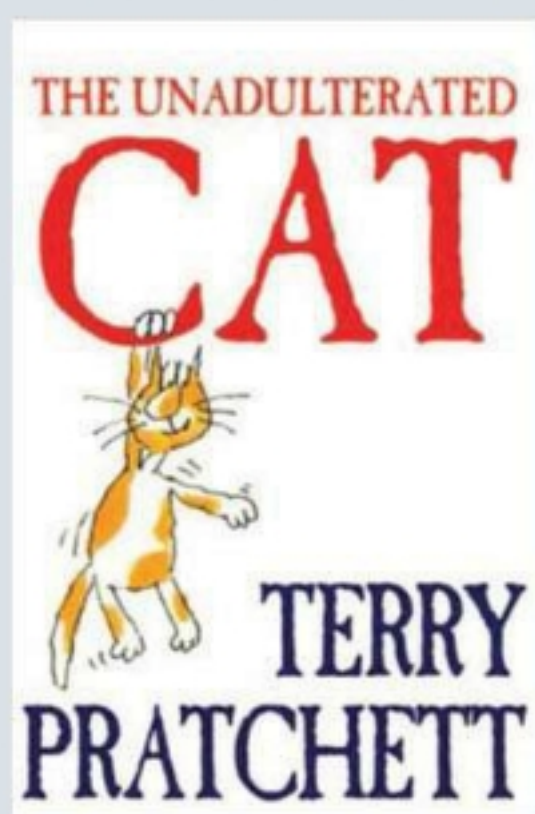
THE DARK SIDE OF THE SUN 1976

A futuristic tale about an heir to a huge fortune whose luck is running out.



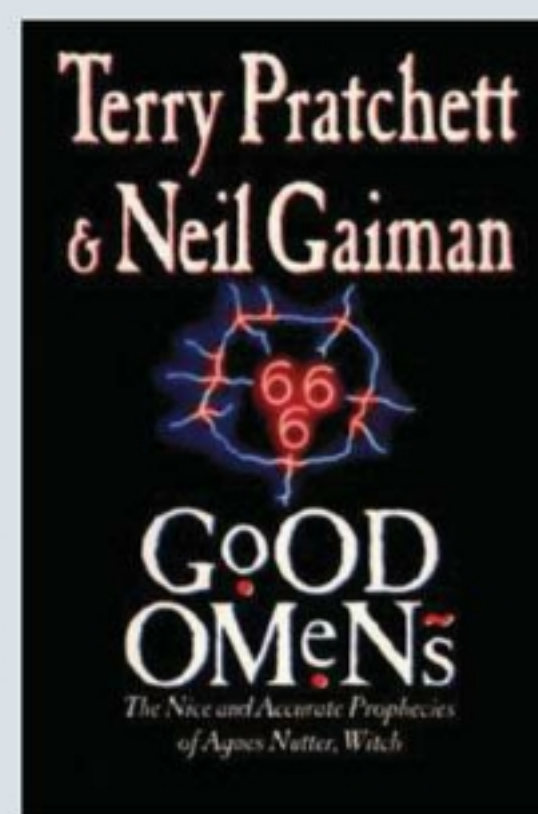
STRATA 1981

This sci-fi novel is seen as a precursor to Discworld, featuring a flat Earth.



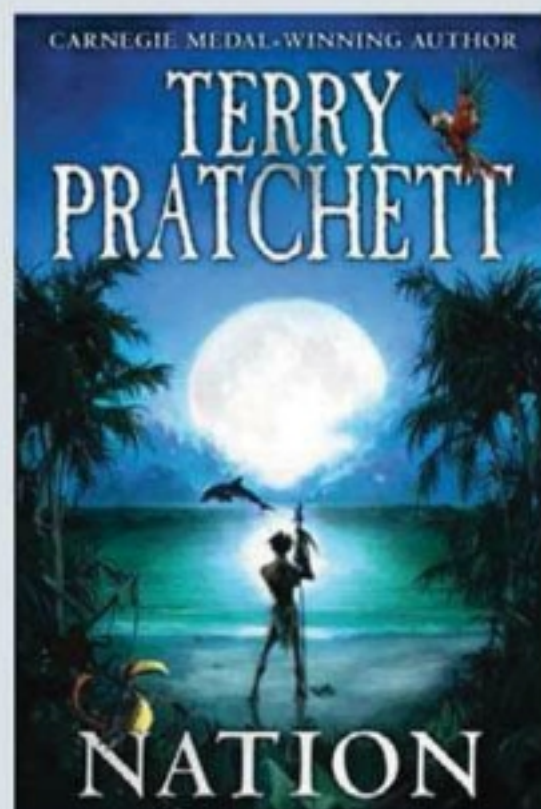
THE UNADULTERATED CAT 1989

An amusingly illustrated guide to spotting 'real' cats.



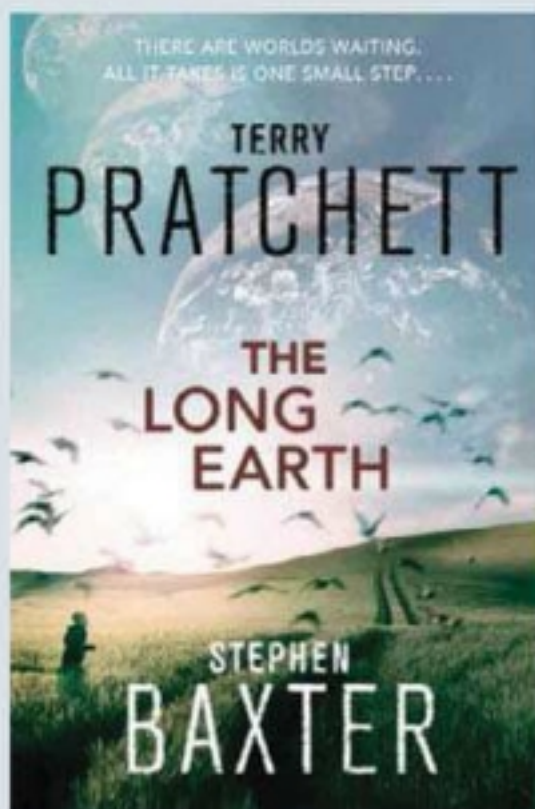
GOOD OMENS 1990

Pratchett and Gaiman teamed up for this apocalyptic comedy.



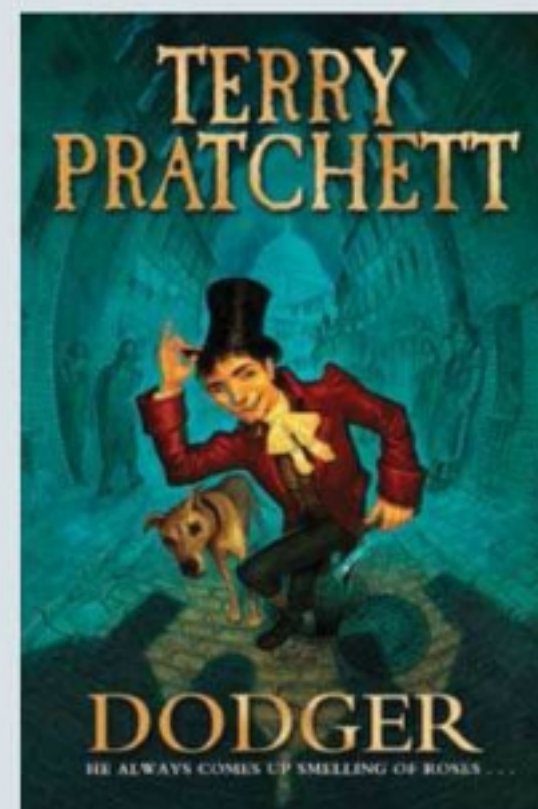
NATION 2008

An adventure story that turns the world upside down, leaving few survivors.



THE LONG EARTH 2012

A cop stumbles upon an invention that will change the way we view the world.



DODGER 2012

History and fantasy collide as Dodger meets various famous figures.

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AN IMAGINE
MONTHLY





THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO... SMALLVILLE

FOR AN INCREDIBLE TEN SEASONS, THE CAST AND CREATORS OF SMALLVILLE MADE US CARE PASSIONATELY ABOUT A CHARACTER PEOPLE HAD TOLD US FOR YEARS WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO RELATE TO – SUPERMAN. WE SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE INVOLVED AT EVERY STAGE IN THIS AMAZING SHOW AND DISCOVER JUST HOW THEY DID THE IMPOSSIBLE, AND REINVENTED A SCI-FI ICON FOR THE 21ST CENTURY...

WORDS EDWARD GROSS

Fictional characters are perennially celebrating anniversaries, though the vast majority of them with any kind of real history are generally relegated to past generations. Superman, who celebrates his 75th birthday in 2013, may have seen his popularity rise and fall over the decades, but since his inception in 1938 he has always been with us in one form or another, ranging from comics, radio and television to Broadway, cinemas and made-for-Blu-ray animated films. It's an extraordinary history, and within that is the unprecedented achievement of the *Smallville* TV series.

Starting in 2001, *Smallville* enjoyed a ten-year run that saw Tom Welling portray the character longer than anyone else. The irony is that *Smallville* was a show that, on the surface, never should have worked. The premise is simple: as Clark Kent reaches adolescence, his Kryptonian powers start to kick in and he spends his high school and college years coming to grips with what he is and what he will one day become. At the same time, we watch the birth and deterioration of his friendship with Lex Luthor (Michael Rosenbaum) as the two move gradually to their final positions within the mythology as arch enemies; and the first true love of his life, Lana Lang (Kristin Kreuk) before he meets the woman he's destined to be with: Lois Lane (Erica Durance). Along the way there's also the introduction of best friend Pete Ross (Sam Jones III), who does exist in the comics, and Chloe Sullivan (Allison Mack), who plays an integral role in helping Clark on his journey, but does not have roots in the comic-book world.

As to the part that should have guaranteed failure, it came from the tagline: 'No tights, no flights', implying that we would not see Clark don his Superman outfit, nor would he be flying around (though it didn't rule out tall leaps in a single bound). Ironically, though, it was probably this which allowed the series to enjoy the longevity it achieved, as it appealed to more of a mainstream audience than a straight Superman series likely would have – which is precisely what co-creators Al Gough and Miles Millar were hoping for.

"For us," says Gough, "the costume was never an issue. Batman's always been sort of cool and people can relate to him. One of the problems with Superman is how do you make him relatable? I think he's always been seen as the goody two-shoes of superheroes. In truth, you never spent that much time in Smallville. It's a wonderful section of Richard Donner's movie (1978's *Superman: The Movie*), but it's only 15 minutes. There really hasn't been any set mythology in Smallville, which was really nice for us, because that's why we were able to go into it and be respectful of the Superman mythology without being slavish to it."

Adds Millar, "The challenge was, how do you do it differently? How do you take an area of his life you haven't seen before and do it in a way that's fresh and original? We never wanted to have the massive comic-book villains-taking-over-the-world kind of plots. We wanted to keep it real."

Smallville's beginning can be traced back to WB's Peter Roth informing the duo that he had the rights to do a young Superman series.

"He thought we had an interesting approach when we came up with our pitch," says Gough,

"which was the idea of the meteor shower, and that Clark's ship arrived with pieces of Kryptonite. That, I think, is the biggest change of the mythology in terms of when Clark comes to Earth: he comes with a shower of meteors. That gave us storytelling possibilities in that the place Clark lives is actually, in a way, home to his greatest weakness, which is Kryptonite. Then the Kryptonite itself allows you to do weird mutations. In the beginning we kept telling people that this show is *Dawson's Creek* on the surface and *Twin Peaks* underneath."

"Then we tied Lana and Lex together in terms of the impact the meteors have on both their lives; killing her parents, making him lose his hair," he adds. "And we came up with the idea of making Jonathan and Martha Kent (John Schneider and Annette O'Toole) younger. We went in and pitched it. Peter loved it, [and] DC signed off on the change in the mythology, which was crucial. The WB felt it was a good fit in terms of what they were trying to do. In truth, it's a lot of fun to reinvent iconic characters and see how they started. To us, Clark is like Anakin Skywalker; somebody whose future you know, but you get to see the journey, which is very interesting. Also, you get to see Lex's journey: how does he become Superman's arch villain when he and Clark start off as friends?"

The strength of the show, at least early on, for the writers came from the Clark/Lana and Clark/Lex relationships. It's what many of them felt allowed the show to connect with the audience.

"The appeal of writing them was that they were characters who cared deeply for each other," says co-executive producer Darren Swimmer, "yet



"HOW DO YOU
MAKE SUPERMAN
RELATABLE? HE'S
ALWAYS BEEN SEEN
AS THE GOODY
TWO-SHOES OF
SUPERHEROES"
AL GOUGH

➤ ultimately can't be open with each other, which made for good drama. What's appealing about these two relationships is watching the characters navigate the labyrinths of secrecy."

Of the Lex/Clark friendship, co-executive producer Brian Peterson poses, "You know how in life sometimes you take a look at the people closest to you and ask yourself, 'Why is this person my friend? We are so different...' Lex and Clark were trying to deal with the human condition from opposite ends of the spectrum, and that's fascinating to me."

SEASON ONE

Things started off in a fairly formulaic fashion, with a Kryptonite-based 'freak of the week' threatening Smallville, Clark's friends or Clark himself, and him having to defeat it while discovering new aspects and/or powers about himself. The 'freak' approach may not have been the most sophisticated means of crafting stories, but it seemed to achieve the desired goal before stories became decidedly more character-orientated.

Says Gough, "When we were breaking the first five or six stories, we wanted to make sure the premise of the show – even if you had never seen *Superman* – was something you'd get. We did not want to go with the thought, 'Oh, everybody's going to know what Kryptonite is.' In truth, a lot of people – especially because we were on the WB and dealing with a younger audience of 12-25 – didn't grow up with the Richard Donner movie or *Lois & Clark*."

Adds Millar, "At the time it was a really radical reinvention of Superman. Kryptonite had never done this stuff before."

SEASON TWO

In its second season, *Smallville* was firing on all creative cylinders, and obviously the audience noticed as, in America, the show reached an average of 6.3 million viewers per week.

"There was only about a quarter of the episodes in year two that had a 'freak of the week,' and even those were much stronger than they were in Season One," offers Gough in explanation of the show's rising popularity at the time. "I also think we got into more of the Superman mythology."

That came largely in the form of exploring Clark's Kryptonian heritage, introducing Jor-El (a disembodied presence in the ship Clark came to Earth in, voiced by Terence Stamp, who played General Zod in the first two *Superman* movies) and exposing Clark to red Kryptonite, which unleashed his 'bad boy' side.

"Mythology is good and bad," Gough opines. "It can be like a crack pipe. You don't want to do too much, because you don't want the show to be insular. You want new viewers to tune in, follow the show and be able to understand it. It was a line we rode well, I think, en route to exploring all of the characters. What Miles and I were happiest about is that all of the characters seemed to have an inner life of their own."



Kristin Kreuk's Lana Lang was a fan-favourite character until her eventual departure.



THE BEST AND WORST OF SMALLVILLE

Faster than a speeding bullet judgments on the highs and lows across all ten seasons

SEASON ONE

BEST: 'Hourglass' (S01E06)

A psychic foresees the futures of both Clark and Lex, and the visions are chilling.

WORST: 'Hothead' (S01E03)

A grumpy coach gains the power to create fire with his mind.

SEASON TWO

BEST: 'Rosetta' (S02E17)

Christopher Reeve reveals Clark's Kryptonian heritage, and we get a bit of the John Williams theme to boot.

WORST: 'Dichotic' (S02E09)

A guy who can split into two cheats on both Chloe and Lana. Ooh, this is a job for...

SEASON THREE

BEST: 'Memoria' (S03E19)

Repressed memories of Lex and Clark are explored thanks to a Kryptonite-based device.

WORST: 'Velocity' (S03E13)

Pete Ross, Kryptonite-enhanced engines and illegal street racing – it's the fast and the spurious.

SEASON FOUR

BEST: 'Crusade' (S04E01)

Clark finally takes flight (the only time until the series finale), and it is AWESOME!

WORST: 'Devoted' (S04E04)

Clark couldn't be around Lana's Kryptonite necklace, but he can ingest gallons of Kryptonite Gatorade and not explode? Really?

SEASON FIVE

BEST: 'Mortal' (S05E02)

Clark gets a short taste of what it's like to be human and live a normal life... until destiny inevitably comes calling an episode later.

WORST: 'Thirst' (S05E05)

Lana gets transformed into a vampire. Are you kidding us?

SEASON SIX

BEST: 'Justice' (S06E11)

Clark, Green Arrow, Flash, Aquaman and Cyborg finally team up in order to stop one of Lex's plans. Nerdgasm!

WORST: 'Hydro' (S06E10)

Tori Spelling guest stars as a Kryptonite-freak who displays the power to turn into... water.



In its early days the show was more akin to a teen drama, having more in common with *Dawson's Creek* than DC mythos.

SMALLVILLE COMPLETE GUIDE

As Millar muses, it takes time for an audience to become invested in the characters, which is why it was a gradual process for the freak-of-the-week format to give way to more character-orientated material.

"You can't immediately set off doing characters until you know who they are," he says. "To me, Lex is always the most fascinating character, as is his father, Lionel. John Glover is someone who was cast as Lionel for the pilot, but he was so good that we kept bringing him back until he became a part of the fabric of the show. Lionel really helped parallel Clark and Lex and how their parents really form who they are. If Clark had been raised by Lionel, he'd be a very different person. Lana is a person who started off as somewhat of a cliché on the surface, but underneath she was something else. With episode three, she resigned as a cheerleader, and ever since became much more of an individual. The character really evolved."

Writer Jeph Loeb, currently the head of Marvel TV but formerly a producer on the series, believes the characters are what drove the show's success. "Gough and Millar's inventiveness – the

"MYTHOLOGY CAN BE LIKE A CRACK PIPE – YOU DON'T WANT TO DO TOO MUCH"
AL GOUGH

meteor shower creating Clark's ongoing guilt, giving you a compelling reason for him to be the hero and the entire Lex/Clark relationship with all its double meanings – was all very fertile ground that was new and unique to the character. Lex's future is decided, so his youth is entirely up for grabs. Anything he does was second-guessed by the audience and in the show by Jonathan Kent, who happened to be the show's moral barometer. So the odds are stacked against him, no matter what. The flip side is that there is a young, naïve Clark who so wants to be Lex's best friend that he can't see any flaws – and Lex was, at that point, sincerely interested in knowing Clark for the rest of his life. If you know what happens, like with Anakin Skywalker in *Star Wars*, then you have a resonance that all the money in the world can't buy you."

SEASON THREE

Season Two ended with no less than five cliffhangers, all of which were successfully navigated in one way or another by Gough and Millar as they managed to pull their characters from the proverbial fire and used such dire situations to launch the third season while simultaneously deepening the character arcs.

"I think Clark's arc brought him from running away from his destiny to, at the end of Season Three, starting to accept it as he realises the consequences of his actions," muses Gough. "He ➤

SEASON SEVEN

BEST: 'Descent' (S07E16)
If for no other reason than for the fact that by having Lex kill Lionel, it firmly locks him into his role.

WORST: 'Fierce' (S07E03)
We don't mind Laura Vandervoort in a bikini, but an episode placing Kara in a beauty pageant for just that reason? Please...

SEASON EIGHT

BEST: 'Legion' (S08E11)
Geoff Johns wrote this episode, which introduces the Legion of Superheroes.

WORST: 'Doomsday' (S08E22)
The entire season built up to the confrontation between Clark and Doomsday, and it takes just one punch to end it.

SEASON NINE

BEST: 'Absolute Justice' (S09E11)
Call us suckers for mythology, but it was cool to see Clark working alongside the likes of Hawkman, Dr Fate and Star Spangled Girl.

WORST: 'Rabid' (S09E03)
A zombie plague spreads across Metropolis. Ah, bite me.

SEASON TEN

BEST: 'Homecoming' (S10E04)
Arguably the best episode of the season, it puts Clark back on the path to becoming Superman.

WORST: 'Harvest' (S10E06)
This episode is basically *Children Of The Corn* with Kryptonite.

MOST DISAPPOINTING EPISODE IN TEN YEARS - 'FINALE'

With the amount of filler that was aired in *Smallville's* final season, it is inexcusable that the show ended in the way it did. Virtually everything was rushed; the final few moments were ridiculous (with Clark as Superman literally pushing Apokalips away), a Darkseid-possessed Lionel from a parallel Earth done away with via one literal fly-through and any shots of Welling in uniform being digital cheats. The audience that had stuck with the series deserved the opportunity to see Clark Kent become Superman, but the creative ball was repeatedly dropped.



As the series progressed, further elements of Superman yore – like the Fortress of Solitude – were viewed through the *Smallville* lens.

➤ went from trying to deny his destiny and escape Jor-El to ultimately knowing what he had to do and making a very heroic decision to save Jonathan's life. His relationship with Lex was illuminated, and he realised that he couldn't tell Lana his secret if he wanted to be safe. Clark also spent the first third of the season trying to put the relationships in his life back together."

Speaking of relationships, the one that got genuinely tiresome in Season Three was between Clark and Lana, with their sequences filled with a distinct sense of repetition. Offers Greg Beeman, who served as co-executive producer and frequent director, "I think we collectively agreed that the Lana/Clark storyline ran out of steam. It began well, but after eight or nine episodes it sort of stalled, and by the time we caught it and realised that it was stalling it was even later. We worked every single permutation of it, but I think we came up with some exciting ideas of where to take Lana that were planted at the end of Season Three. She goes away in the finale, and when she comes back there were some interesting new dynamics."

Gough emphasises that much of year three was spent with Lex being victimised by Lionel, which presented sufficient explanation as to why Lex moves down a darker path.

He offers, "Clark said it: 'The more you battle your father, the more you become him.' But Lex needs that thing in his life to rage against. He has that line in Season Three when he says, 'Maybe I'm the hero of the story.' That was a good moment, and I think a very interesting one."

SEASON FOUR

As Season Three ended, the characters were undergoing tumultuous circumstances, which all had to be resolved in the new year. Additionally, Season Four featured the positively received first self-propelled launch of Clark into the stratosphere – an encounter with future Flash Bart Allen (Kyle Gallner) and the introduction of Erica Durance as Chloe's cousin, Lois Lane. On the negative side, fans did not enjoy Lana's new love Jason Teague (*Supernatural*'s Jensen Ackles), nor the many personality-switch episodes, Lionel's bouncing back and forth between good and evil or a far too pervasive obsession with sex and suggested nudity that felt incongruous to the series.

"The characters were getting older," Millar offers in explanation, "and in Season Four Clark lost his innocence in a way – thematically. He's getting older, he's a jock, he's really good looking, he's interested in the subject, and somehow we have to deal with this. Otherwise, you watch the show and feel like you're in the Fifties."

Yet, for all the criticisms, Gough and Millar stand behind Season Four, believing that it fulfilled the goals they mapped out for themselves at the beginning of that year.

"We wanted to lighten the tone of the show and get back to the more human stories that we told in the first two seasons," says Gough, "and away from secret labs and sort of heavy dark mythology we got into in Season Three. We wanted to really exploit



the fact that it was our last year in high school, and this was the last time we were going to be able to do some of these stories."

Admits Millar, "We always try to have the show make sense in terms of the character arcs and whether or not there are enough stories to sustain a season. Does everyone move forward? Do the relationships change? For me the season really crescendoed in a good way. But one of the biggest strengths had to be Lois. It's always good to introduce a new person to a series, let alone an icon. We just really lucked out with Erica [Durant]. The character was a really cool interpretation of Lois, and she brought humour that we really hadn't had. She sparked with Clark, which is nice."

"Lois was the only person who didn't feel as though Clark walked on water," Gough interjects with a laugh. "In terms of the Lana/Clark relationship, Lana had a new boyfriend, but by the end of the season she was obviously getting closer to Clark, and they professed their love for each other, which felt good. I also think that Lex and Clark spiralled away from each other. That obviously got heated up in the last parts of the season where he clearly thought Clark was totally lying to him and Lana didn't trust him."

Noted above is the fact that Bart Allen appeared, marking the first DC Comics hero to do so besides Clark. "Every year we had

"IF YOU IGNORE SEX, YOU WATCH THE SHOW AND FEEL LIKE YOU'RE IN THE FIFTIES"

MILES MILLAR

an idea we were never able to crack, and this is one we had since Season One – how do we get the Flash on the show?" Millar notes. "Eventually, we figure out a way to do it. In Season Four we wanted to bring in more DC characters, and it seemed like the right time."

SEASON FIVE

The highs and lows of the Clark/Lana romance took place, with Lana gradually finding herself pushed towards Lex due to Clark's apparent lack of honesty, and Jonathan Kent dying of a heart attack. Also, the show built on its Flash appearance with the arrival of DC characters Arthur Curry (Alan Ritchson) and Victor Stone (Lee Thompson Young – respectively Aquaman and Cyborg) as well as Brainiac, which takes human form and manipulates Clark before stranding him in the Phantom Zone while the spirit of Zod takes over Lex.

"Year five was a big growing up year for Clark," says Gough. "With his dad dying, he now had to step up and really take on his mantle, which I think you saw him starting to do. In year six, when he gets back from the Phantom Zone, which is the ultimate incarceration, he discovers the path of the hero is a difficult one. He sacrificed his dad basically for Lana, and now he doesn't even have Lana anymore. He and Lex are enemies. He's unleashed this evil force on the world in the form of Zod, and so it's sort of where does he stand in his journey? Lex has embraced his darker elements and now so has Lana, so I think a lot of year six, too, was the corruption of good as well with people sort of wandering around the paths they've chosen."

Enthuses Millar, "Without question this was the best season we ever had. It was consistent, it had continuity, it had momentous change with the death of Jonathan, it had Clark maturing, it had him out of high school, the Daily Planet, the Fortress of Solitude, it had Lex and Lana, Lex going bad – just a bunch of really important, life-changing moments for Clark and the other characters."

New to the mix was, as noted, the addition of other DC heroes, with a focus on how they impact on each other and their ultimate



SEASON 11 AND BEYOND?

Writer Bryan Q Miller on the direction of DC's *Smallville* Season 11 comic-book

***Smallville* had the challenge of hewing to the mythology as best as it could while reaching a mainstream audience. What kind of balancing act does the comic have to do?**

There were a few things where, towards the end of the series, everything got lined up probably as close as it was going to be to lining up with everyone's traditional notion of what the Superman mythology is. With the comic, it just carries the ball down the field. There might be some people and notions from the past and present DC universe that pop in and out, but from a narrative standpoint – a plot standpoint – it's all grounded in Clark's first year as Superman.

Who is this Superman?

What's great about this version is that with *Smallville*-Clark, so much of his personal conflict of "what do I use my powers for, do I expose myself, should I be saving people?" – that's all been covered in the show. A lot of his angst is dealt with at this point, so rather than rehash that, this Superman is a Superman who, right before the comic starts, in the series finale pushed a planet out of orbit and saved Earth as his first big, grandiose act in front of the whole world. Superman arrived and saved the planet. He's riding the contact high a little bit, so you've got a Superman who very much enjoys what he's doing. He's taking the ideals and values and principles that Ma and Pa Kent instilled in him during the early years of the show and kind of spreading that and paying it forward to everyone he can in a very Christopher Reeve Superman Zen-like way.

It's intriguing seeing the exploration of the Tom Welling Superman and Michael Rosenbaum Lex Luthor...

There's not too much time spent on what happened during the six months, but Lex's mind was wiped on the show – though not to the point where he doesn't know how to walk or feed himself. So you've got a Lex who came to from being poisoned with his dead sister on the ground, a planet in orbit and the world seeming to come to an end. He's in a place now where he's leading the xenophobia charge. Someone with a telescope got pictures of alien slaves on the surface of Apokalips when it was in orbit. The world knows we're not alone, so you've got Lex leading the "we need to defend ourselves" charge. He is doing everything he can to try and embolden humanity to protect itself moving forward.

Smallville Season 11: Volume 1 is available from 16 April 2013, priced at £10.99.



As per a teen romance show, it wasn't simply a case of *Lois & Clark* revisited.



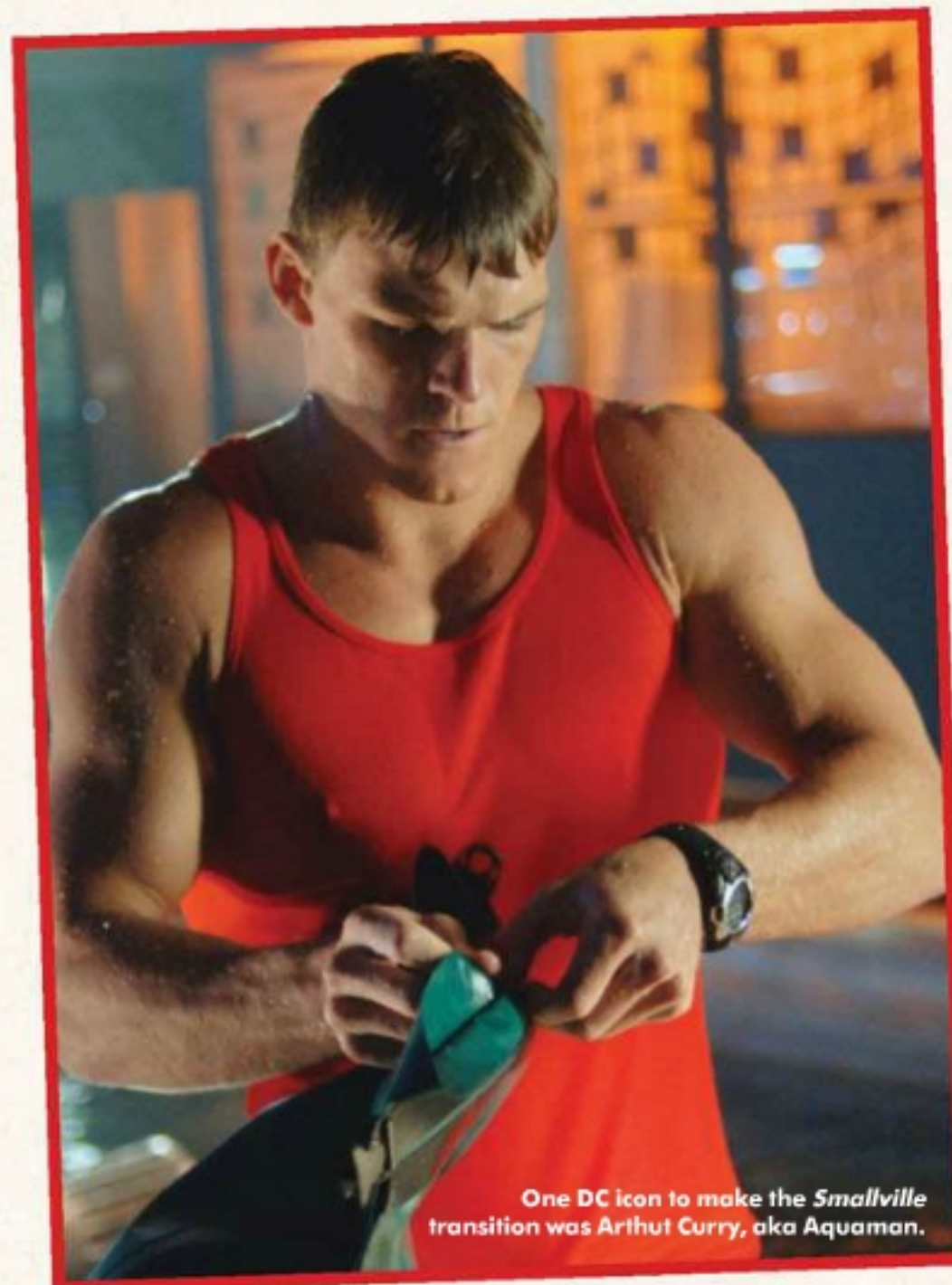
Even early on, questions regarding Lex's true nature were never far away.



Far removed from the 'boy scout' persona, *Smallville* didn't shy away from exploring Clark's dark side.



Inevitably, relationships formed a big part of the show's narrative.



One DC icon to make the *Smallville* transition was Arthur Curry, aka Aquaman.

"WE ALWAYS WANTED TO BRING IN MORE DC CHARACTERS" MILES MILLAR

destinies. Of Cyborg, Gough says, "Victor Stone is a high school football star who has a full ride to USC, but then he's in a terrible car accident. In our version, LuthorCorp takes him on as a project and builds the limbs and the artificial intelligence that goes into that. It's really a question of, 'How much humanity do I have? How much [of a] machine am I?' Clark teaches him how to control his abilities. He realises his life isn't what he thought it was going to be, but he can still have a fulfilling life, and Clark helps put him on that road. With Arthur Curry, we played him more as a Greenpeace activist. He's determined to save the ocean, and Lex is doing something nefarious involving a defence contract. In a weird way, Arthur is probably two feet from being an eco-terrorist, and Clark has to sort of reel him back in terms of what he's willing to do. Aquaman learns that he has to use better judgment and can't just destroy things because he has the ability to do so. I think what he brings to Clark is that if Clark is going to use his powers, he has to think globally. That's what Aquaman brings to the table in the same way that the Flash got him to see that he could have some fun with his powers."

SEASON SIX

Lois and Clark break up, and she marries Lex (for reasons too complicated to explain here), but that dissolves as well when she realises he's been lying to her about everything – including her seeming pregnancy; Martha becomes a senator and moves to Washington DC, and there was the introduction of Oliver Queen/Green Arrow (Justin Hartley) and Martian Manhunter (Phil Morris), while the episode 'Justice' brought together Victor Stone, Arthur Curry and Bart Allen as embryonic version of the Justice League (see boxout). Surprisingly, it was Green Arrow/Oliver



As it progressed, *Smallville* increasingly abandoned its more trivial trappings and began to tackle progressively darker storylines.

Queen that has had the most impact, bringing *Smallville* as close to a Superman/Batman dynamic as it got.

"The integration of Green Arrow provided a great way to humanise the show and depict a hero who is a human being as opposed to someone with powers, thus inspiring Clark in a way that no other character has done so before on this show," offers Todd Slavkin, who served as writer, director and producer at various points in the show's history. "It made Clark an active participant rather than reactive, which he had been throughout this series – and we all know Superman is an active hero. So Oliver Queen brought in a whole sense of justice, that it's every citizen's responsibility to go in and tackle injustice in the world. I think that shook Clark up and propelled him toward his future destiny."

SEASON SEVEN

Highlights of the season included Lex growing closer to learning Clark's secret, Lana pulling away from the people she knows and loves from Smallville and the appearance of Clark's biological cousin, Kara Zor-El (Laura Vandervoort), who he tries to educate while dealing with Lex's attempts to find out what she is.

"Here's somebody who's a flesh-and-blood family member who needs his guidance," says Gough of Kara, "so it puts Clark into a bit more of a parental-mentor role rather than being a child going to a parent. For us it felt very natural, and the next step in his evolution that he would have to sort of mentor not only a Kryptonian, but a cousin who's a girl, who's 19, who can fly and who doesn't have 18 years of living with the Kents as a moral background."

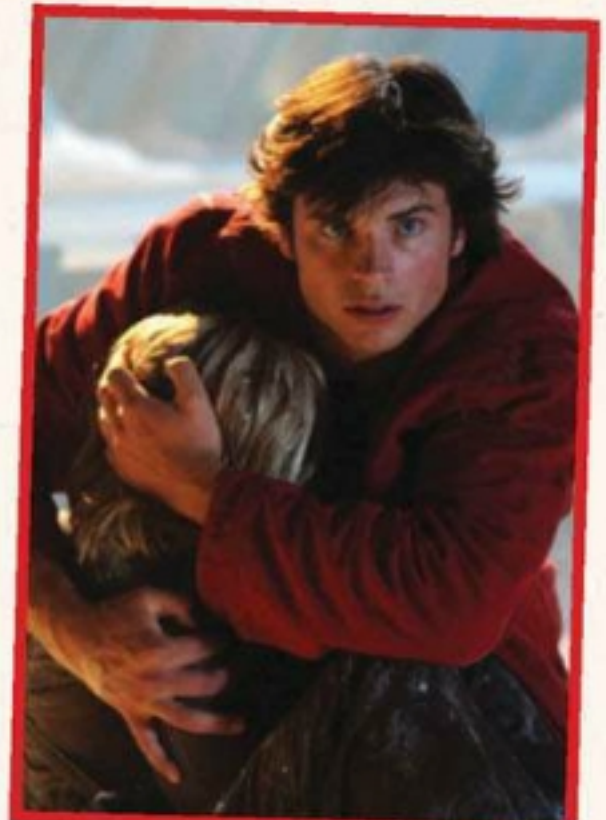
Smallville's real drama at the end of Season Seven was the cast and crew shake-up that took place. The contracts for both Kristin

Kreuk and Michael Rosenbaum were up, and neither one of them wanted to continue in their respective roles of Lana and Lex. And then, with the season having followed a 100-day writer's strike – coupled with a budget cut from the studio – Gough and Millar left the show. Replacing them would be their four co-executive producers, Brian Peterson, Kelly Souders, Darren Swimmer and Todd Slavkin.

"The budget was the final thing," reflects Gough. "We'd done seven seasons, and then a couple of weeks after the strike ended Warner Brothers came to us and said, 'The only way the show is going to get picked up is if we dramatically reduce the budget.' We knew Rosenbaum wasn't coming back, because they certainly didn't have the money for him. They had Tom for Season Eight, so they definitely wanted to get to Season Eight, but for us, we told the stories we wanted to tell, and going into a season without the Lex/Clark dynamic – which we'd always seen as the core of the show – we realised it was time for us to step away and do other things."

SEASON EIGHT

Lex was written out of the show, having discovered Clark's secret and being subsequently buried in the collapse of the Fortress of Solitude. Additionally, Lana left Smallville (though for contractual reasons Kreuk would return for several episodes); Tess Mercer (Cassidy Freeman) took over LexCorp, sparks began to fly between Clark and Lois and the show began to move in a decidedly more Superman-esque direction, with Clark working with Lois at the Daily Planet. Added into the mix was Davis Bloome (Sam Witwer), revealed to be a *Smallville* take on Doomsday (the ➤



NO TIGHTS, ONE FLIGHT

In the fourth season premiere, 'Crusade', Clark is possessed by his Kal-El Kryptonian personality and soars into the stratosphere to retrieve an artefact from Lex Luthor's private jet – while it's in mid-flight.

"If we were going to break the rule," reflects co-creator Miles Millar, "we wanted it to be a significant moment in Clark's life, and I think we came up with a way to do so while setting in motion the events of Season Four in a really cool way."

Explains visual effects supervisor Mat Beck, "In terms of the actual flying, we didn't want to just have Tom Welling in front of a green screen. We were trying to give him the opportunity [for] a little bit of performing, and Tom was better than fabulous. He was constantly looking for ways to look serious, motivated and intense, but at the same time doing slight movements that would motivate movements in flight. He gave us an enormous amount to work with. Most of the flying sequences were done with either him on a harness or standing on a green platform with the camera flying past him. That allowed him to give a lot of performance in terms of turning his body this way or that way."

The sequence actually kicked off with Clark crouching down and knocking his mother, Martha, aside. From there, an energy effect gathered around him before take off. "In essence," notes Beck, "he draws the energy to him, it compacts around him and launches him into the air... I think it came off well."



The finished scene yielded impressive results for a TV show.

THE SECRETS
BEHIND
CLARK'S
ONE AND
ONLY
FLIGHT

"IF WE WERE GOING TO BREAK THE RULE, WE WANTED IT TO BE A SIGNIFICANT MOMENT" MILES MILLAR



Much effort was put into Clark's first flight.





Though they started the series as friends, the seeds of Lex and Clark's legendary rivalry were gradually sown.

➤ creature that killed Superman in the comics) and the arrival of such DC luminaries as the Legion of Superheroes and Zatanna.

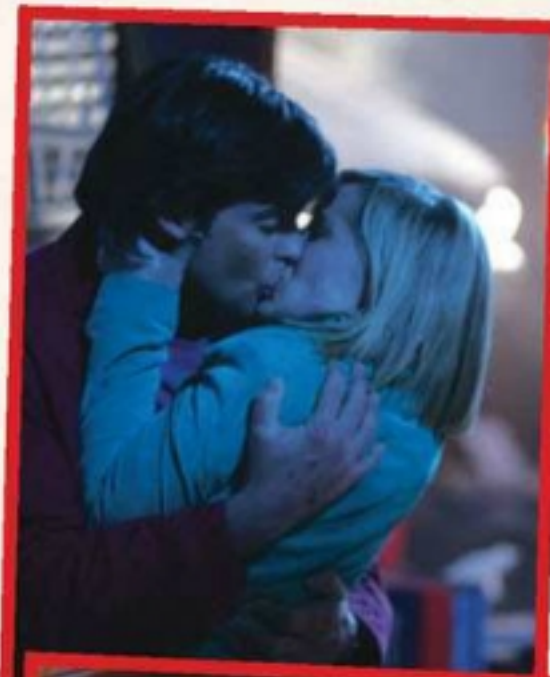
Says Souders of the change, "Saving people in *Smallville* was one thing, where Clark had to run to the factory to save Chloe and the roads weren't very crowded. But being alive in Metropolis as Superman is a very different experience, and he found out very quickly that it's not so easy when you're running through crowded streets or you have to run into a crowded crisis situation."

"Or," interjects Peterson, "you're accountable to Lois back at the Daily Planet. Up until that point we hadn't done a lot with Clark trying to balance the double identity of Clark Kent and his Superman figure, so Season Eight was very much about double identity and him learning the balance of that, because that's a long journey in itself that we hadn't even touched on until then."

And during it all, Green Arrow played a role in helping to solidify Clark's decision. "There's an interesting dynamic between the Green Arrow and him," opines Darren Swimmer, "because Green Arrow was always the person nudging him and kind of giving him a little kick in the butt to go out and be more proactive. So while Clark in Season Eight was really accepting his destiny, the Green Arrow started questioning what his own destiny really [was] and what kind of superhero he really wants to be. That was an interesting dynamic."

SEASON NINE

In the aftermath of his battle with Doomsday, Clark is determined to protect Metropolis as 'The Blur', wearing a long black trenchcoat and black T-shirt emblazoned with the Superman 'S'. As he fights crime, he leaves behind his heat vision-inscribed symbol as a sign to the people. Along the way Lois becomes



fascinated with The Blur at the same time she and Clark begin to realise that there is something between them. Also, Krypton's past comes into play as Major Zod (Callum Blue) and his followers, who have arrived on Earth with a desire for conquest and a need to obtain the superpowers they mysteriously don't have; there's an alliance of sorts between Tess Mercer and Zod, and the arrival of such DC heroes as the Justice Society of America and villains Metallo (Brian Austin Green) and Amanda Waller (Pam Grier), and the Checkmate agency.

Behind the scenes there were continuing shake-ups, with Swimmer and Slavkin departing, leaving Peterson and Souders as dual showrunners. They were determined to really move Clark towards his destiny.

Notes Souders, "For us, this was a step closer to the actual Superman costume. Clark isn't a guy at that point who was probably going to put on the tights and the boots and get something made. He hadn't gone quite as far as Green Arrow; he was still on the path to becoming that man, but he was definitely recognising that there is this second identity. As much as he knew what Clark Kent looked like, he needed to figure out what the Superman part of him looks like. Even though it wasn't quite the costume everybody was used to seeing, it was one step closer to getting there."

"WE DIDN'T JUST WANT TO DO AN ENDING; WE WANTED A BEGINNING"
BRIAN PETERSON

SEASON TEN

In the aftermath of Zod's defeat, Lois comes to realise that Clark and The Blur are one and the same, and their romance begins to grow. In the meantime, public sentiment is turning against costumed heroes, encouraged by the minions of Darkseid, who is manipulating humanity and threatening Earth. The season also offers spiritual guidance to Clark from Jonathan, Lionel Luther from a parallel world tries to garner a power base for himself, Supergirl returns, the Chloe/Oliver Queen romance grows, Lex Luthor briefly returns and, at last, Clark Kent becomes Superman (though before doing so he dons a red leather jacket emblazoned with an 'S').

Souders points out, "In Season Nine, Clark delved into his darkest hour, and I thought that was really interesting and something we needed to do in order to go through a pretty rigorous test for him to make it to the Superman moment. But what was interesting about it was that by the end of the season he really wasn't Superman. He wasn't that bright, shiny inspiration; he kind of was a loner who wasn't trusting of the people around him, who hid on rooftops and in shadows, and that's a very different guy than Superman is. So it kind of made us look at the 22 episodes of Season Ten as a way of getting him to that moment."

Closing, Peterson emphasises it was important to them that "We didn't want to just do an ending; we wanted to do a beginning. What we were aiming for was giving people the emotion of what's to come since the end of the show lines up with every movie and a lot of other things. Unlike other shows, we know where the story goes, so it's a hand-off to those other pieces of mythology rather than just an ending." ☺

Smallville Season Seven is airing on week days at 7pm on Syfy. *Smallville: The Complete Series* is available on DVD, priced at £79.99.



INTERVIEW

RONALD D MOORE

RONALD D MOORE IS A NAME HALLOWED BY SCIENCE FICTION FANS NOT JUST FOR HIS STELLAR WRITING ON STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION AND DEEP SPACE NINE, BUT ALSO FOR BRINGING THE CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED REBOOT OF BATTLESTAR GALACTICA TO OUR SCREENS. WE SAT HIM DOWN TO FIND OUT HOW THE DARKNESS OF BSG WAS BORN ON THE BRIDGE OF THE ENTERPRISE...

WORDS KRYSTAL SIM



Joining *Star Trek: The Next Generation* in its third season, writer-turned-story editor-turned-producer Ronald D Moore arguably did more to set sci-fi off to meet its 21st Century destiny than any other creator, ushering in a new age of darker and more

emotionally literate sci-fi epics that eventually found its true voice in his celebrated, fan-favourite reboot of *Battlestar Galactica*. We talk to Moore about his incredible career, which thus far has encompassed three *Star Trek* series and two movies, and two incarnations of *Battlestar Galactica*...

Is it true your big break into the world of *Star Trek* came after a tour of the *TNG* set arranged by a girlfriend who had worked on the pilot?

She still knew some people, and arranged a set tour for me. I had written a script ('The Bonding'), which I took along with me on the set tour. The guy who was giving that tour read it, and he turned out to be one of Gene Roddenberry's assistants, so it was an incredibly lucky break.

You joined the writing staff in the third season, when the series really started to flourish. What was the perception of the show at the time?

When I joined the show there was a sense that we weren't real *Star Trek*. I remember going to conventions around that period, and you would see T-shirts and posters saying that the *TNG* crew were pretenders and there was really only one real *Star Trek* – there was only a grudging acceptance of the series. We all felt like the underdogs or the stepchildren that nobody wanted. We weren't exactly loved.

It wasn't really until when 'Best Of Both Worlds Part I' premiered that things started to turn around and people started to talk about the show: "Did you see the cliffhanger? What's going to happen to Picard, and what's Riker going to do?" There was a shift in how the show was viewed by the fans.

Michael Piller joined the writing staff at the beginning of the third season, just before he hired me, and he wanted it to be more of a character-driven show. He wanted to focus more intensely on regular characters on the Enterprise and approach every story by understanding

whose story it was. Was it a Troi show, a Picard show or a Riker show? That way you were immediately connecting with one of the characters in that story.

Your scripts always had dark corners to them. Was it tough making a case for more emotionally complex and darker story arcs?

I always enjoyed pushing characters and finding where the cracks in the armour were, as well as humanising villains and exploring our heroes' flaws. I just found that more fascinating than doing an 'alien of the week'. I liked looking at these people and making them more human by finding out that they weren't perfect; that they did make mistakes. It was how they dealt with those mistakes, and how they dealt with death and their psychological turmoil that I found was the most fascinating part of the show.

In the episode 'Family', the breakdown Picard has in front of his brother is very moving.

I was really glad that I got to write that one, and it's a great performance from the two actors. Patrick and Jeremy [Kemp] had known each other for a while and enjoyed working together, and it was such an



**"I WOULD HAVE GONE EVEN
FURTHER THAN JJ ABRAMS"**
RONALD D MOORE



Battlestar Galactica allowed Moore to go into darker territory than was possible in the *Star Trek* universe.

interesting episode. There was no action whatsoever; there was no jeopardy except emotional jeopardy.

When you moved on to write for *Deep Space Nine*, did the space station setting influence your writing?

The station didn't go anywhere, so the plot lines always hung around; whatever you wrote last week was going to be there next week. You couldn't not pick up a plot thread that had been established in a continuing character story, so inevitably the writing moved in that direction and made *DS9* an even more character-driven piece than *TNG*. The Bajoran/Cardassian conflict made for a lot of interesting plot lines. The great thing about it was that you could play those ideas out over years as opposed to doing a few episodes here and there; you could really elaborate on that ongoing story week after week. I thought Gul Dukat was a great character and villain, and the Kira, Sisko and Dukat relationship was one of the central triangles on that show.

What challenges did you face adapting the *TNG* cast for the big screen in *Generations* and *First Contact*?

Generations was a big learning curve for Brannon [Braga, co-writer] and I. It was our first feature, and it was also transitioning the show into a feature format. Paramount had a laundry list of things that they wanted to do with that first film, which really hemmed us in terms of creativity. They wanted to have *The Original Series*' cast in it, but they couldn't only appear for the

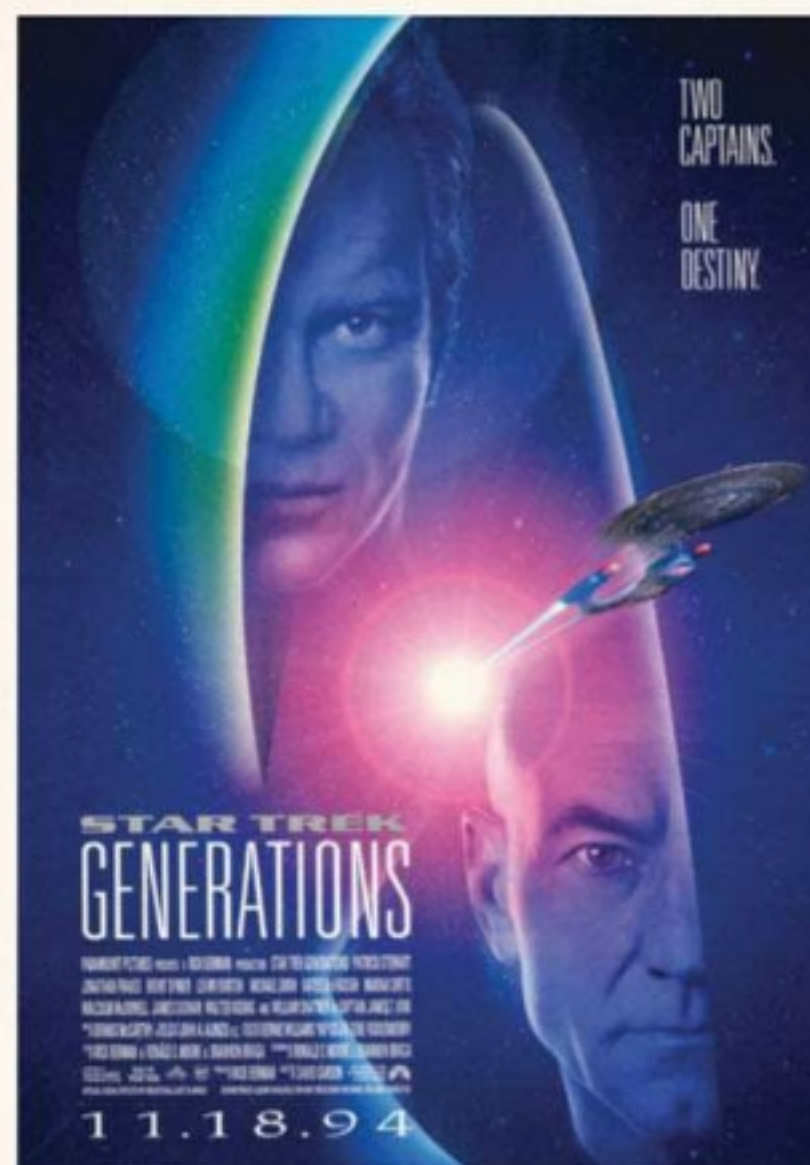
"WHEN I JOINED THE SHOW THERE WAS A SENSE THAT WE WEREN'T REAL STAR TREK" RONALD D MOORE

first 15 minutes; they wanted Kirk to reappear at the end; they wanted a Picard story as well as a Data story; they didn't really want it to be a time travel story, but they wanted a big villain, and they also wanted Klingons. We had to figure out how to weave the story around all of these.

The movies are much more action-adventure orientated – it's the Enterprise and its crew versus a particular villain, doing a lot more running and jumping with more battles and explosions. And that really wasn't what we were doing week in, week out on the series. The series was a character piece, and it was a show about morality plays, big ideas and science fiction. The movies are angled in a different direction, so part of the experience was us realising that we had reset what the show was about. On the show we did a whole episode about Data getting a girlfriend! It's a wonderful episode, but you'll never do that as a movie! That'll never pan out. The movies are fun, and they have their own joy – sitting down, eating popcorn and watching this big flashy adventure. They don't really get an opportunity to go too much deeper than that, because the expectation is move on to the next space battle.

What did you learn from those movies?

I don't know, to be honest. It's such a different format.





Sadly, *Battlestar Galactica* didn't enjoy the long shelf life of *Star Trek*, and prequel series *Caprica* lasted for just one season.



RONALD D MOORE INTERVIEW

I really love television because I like the ability to take a group of characters, evolve them, change them and play around with them over many hours. I like to take a story in a very different direction from where it started, to take risks and to try different kinds of storytelling. A movie is a big two-hour single story angled in a very specific direction. So I learned a lot from doing things like the *Star Trek* movies and *Mission: Impossible*, but I still love television; it's still the place that gives me the most satisfaction.

If the opportunity ever arose to be showrunner of a new series of *Star Trek*, would you take it or are you done with that universe?

You know what, never say never. It would depend on what it is and what the circumstances are. Is this something someone has brought to me or is it an idea I've had? It's a great format, it's a great franchise and I still have a tremendous amount of affection and love for it, and I would never say never. It would just depend on the specifics.

What did you make of the JJ Abrams *Star Trek* movie reboot?

I enjoyed it. I'd been thinking that the franchise needed to reset. The continuity had become so dense and complicated with all the different series and back stories that it was almost impenetrable to newcomers. It just becomes hard to be creative in that environment; you find yourself pitching stories and stopping yourself to ask, 'but does this contradict something that was said in Series Three, Episode 12 of *DS9*?'

I liked the idea of going back to the beginning with the new movie; go back to Kirk, Spock and McCoy and the five-year mission and just start over. I thought it was a great cast and it brought a whole different energy and life to *Star Trek*.

Personally, I would have gone even further. I wouldn't have done the time travel plot or had Leonard [Nimoy] in the film; I would have just started at zero and not even acknowledged anything before.

A ship far from home trying to reach Earth: there are some parallels between *Star Trek: Voyager* – a show you didn't quite mesh with – and *Battlestar Galactica*. Would a Ron Moore-helmed *Voyager* have been a lot darker in tone?

I think it would have been darker, but I don't know how dark it could have gone, because the *Star Trek* universe has a certain fundamental optimism to it that you have to maintain, or it isn't *Star Trek*, and I don't think I couldn't have taken *Voyager* as dark as *Battlestar*. It just wouldn't have fit in with the ethos of that universe, and I'm not sure it would have been welcomed if I had tried it.

What made you want to reboot *Battlestar Galactica*, and what do you love about the show and what you accomplished?

The show came to me. I mulled it over and realised that there was a tremendous opportunity to do a new kind of science fiction and expand on some of the ideas I had on *Star Trek* that I knew didn't fit in that

universe – darker, more ambiguous, more serialised and a vérité style to shooting, taking a harsher approach to visual effects.

There were things I couldn't explore on *Star Trek* that I had the opportunity to do on *Battlestar*, and looking back I'm very proud of it – it was so much greater than I had hoped it could be. The production, the cast, the crew – the whole ensemble that we put together lifted the material. One of the things I was most proud of was that the show was even better on screen than it was on the page. I was proud of the writing we did, and then I'd watch it and go 'wow, this is better'. The end result was better than the creative idea from the outset, and I think that's very rare.

It was sad to see *Caprica* cut short. What were you most proud of from that show?

The show was ambitious, and we were determined to do something different, not just another knock off *Battlestar*. We really tried to do something complex and interesting, and we just weren't able to pull that off in the time that we had. We had a tremendous cast who

really carried the series from week to week, and it's just too bad that we didn't have more time to really find our feet with it.



Battlestar Galactica: The Plan is out now on DVD and Blu-ray, priced at £5.26 and £13.99.

FLASHBACK

TWIN PEAKS

REVOLUTIONARY NINETIES DRAMA TWIN PEAKS PIONEERED THE FORMAT OF WHAT EVENTUALLY BECAME SERIALISED STORYTELLING IN ALL FORMS OF TELEVISION. HERE, THE SHOW'S CO-CREATOR AND WRITER MARK FROST DISCUSSES THE SHOW'S EARLY DEMISE, HOW HE INITIALLY PLANNED IT TO RUN FOR FIVE SEASONS AND HIS COLLABORATION WITH DAVID LYNCH...

WORDS JODIE TYLEY

***Twin Peaks* went from being the biggest show on TV to a cancelled obscurity within just over a year. Buoyed by a huge central mystery that essentially carried the momentum of the entire story – the nasty death of high school prom queen Laura Palmer and the way it affected the entire cast of characters within the town of Twin Peaks – it was a compelling, wonderful and unique show defined by the hallmarks of film director David Lynch. Yet, it was subject to almost all of the negative elements that lead to our favourite TV shows being cancelled today.**

This illustrious serial drama was hit by network pressure that forced the resolution of the investigation into the murder of Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee). This then pushed the Pacific Northwest-shot show into a creative corner it almost didn't pull out of, and ratings crashed following this resolution, which led to it being put on hiatus by its network, ABC. On top of all that, its creator, David Lynch, left the show at one point to work on the film *Wild At Heart*, thus leaving the show rudderless and directionless. It was a lot of bad luck that a show of *Twin Peaks'* quite extraordinary depth and complexity didn't really deserve. Had it never existed, there would be no *Lost*, *The Sopranos*, *The Wire* or *The Walking Dead* – it simply allowed long-form storytelling to exist on credible network television beyond the realms of the daily soap opera, which *Twin Peaks* parodied.

In retrospect, its reputation has sharply ascended, and one factor attributed to this success is the combination of two very different behind-the-scenes talents: Lynch himself, an Academy Award-nominated director who masterfully explores the underlying darkness within man, and Mark Frost, an accomplished TV screenwriter who cut his teeth by scripting 29 episodes of the esteemed cop drama *Hill Street Blues*.



Speaking to SciFiNow, Frost agrees that the mixture of skills in this collaboration was key to the creation of something so iconic. "Yeah, and the other element that people don't consider is the strength of our friendship," he explains. "[David and I] get along so well and our sensibilities just match up really beautifully when we're working together or even hanging out, so what you're seeing is the product of two minds that are very much in sync, but also two people who share a lot of the same enthusiasm and sense of humour, and we have an awfully good time when we work together. That, I think, came across in the show as well. We've known each other now for 26 years, so we go back quite a way."

When reflecting on the impact *Twin Peaks* had on the landscape of television, Frost explains his initial awareness that he and Lynch were working on a different sort of project. "It's funny. At the time we

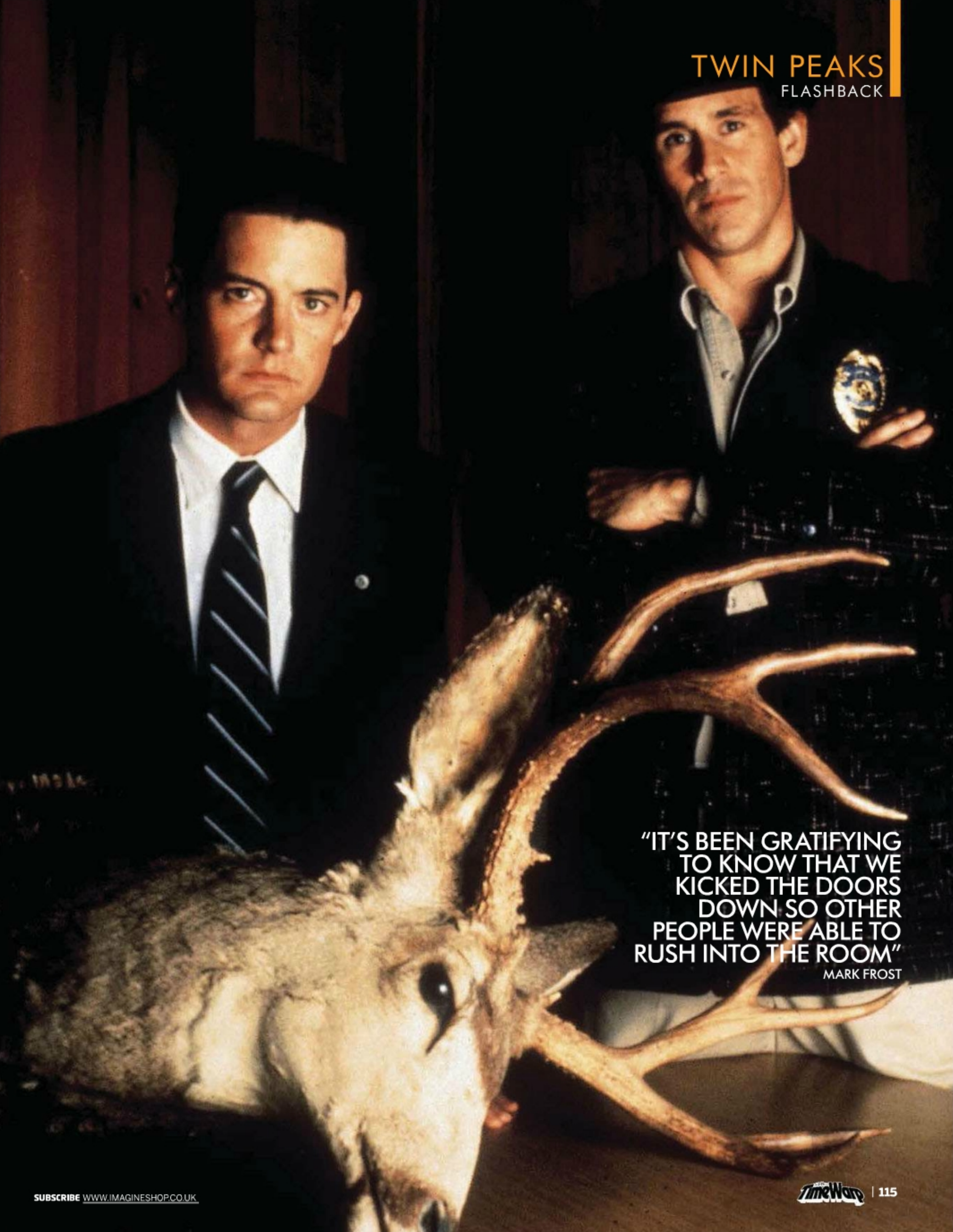
were making the show I said to David, 'This is really a subversive television show for a major network, I don't think I've ever seen anything like this before.' I was secretly gleeful that we were able to sneak it through, because I found so much of network television at the time so bland and formulaic, and the fact that the show has had such a long life and it's been rediscovered, really, by a whole new generation of people and so many people who went on to create shows."

Beyond the aforementioned dramas, popular comedy *Psych* staged a terrifically geeky tribute to the show just two years ago in an episode titled 'Dual Spires' – a must-see for any *Twin Peaks* devotees that reunited many members of the original cast. Even *The Simpsons* had two great jokes about *Twin Peaks* years after it went off the air. Frost perceives that the show's impact has grown with time, and that it affected not just the content and structure of television drama, but the way it was approached philosophically. "What happened when we went off the air was television kind of exploded; we had the advent of all the cable networks like HBO and Showtime and half a dozen others that have since followed, all of which are doing much more adventurous programming, and many of the people I know who created those shows have cited *Twin Peaks* as a point of inspiration for them. I think that's been really gratifying to know that we kicked the doors down and then a lot of other people were able to rush into the room."

But being revolutionary meant that *Twin Peaks* was treated as an unknown quantity by an impatient audience – and the sticky business of the show's forced resolution is something Frost has dwelled on in the meantime. "We've debated about that a lot," he admits. "We were getting heavy, heavy pressure from the network to solve the murder; in fact, they wanted it solved at the end of the first season, and David's instinct – and mine to the same extent – was 'No, we don't have to do that; we should keep

TWIN PEAKS

FLASHBACK



"IT'S BEEN GRATIFYING
TO KNOW THAT WE
KICKED THE DOORS
DOWN SO OTHER
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MARK FROST



Although the show's journey was ultimately a short one, it nonetheless paved the way for numerous others like it.

"THERE WAS AN INEVITABLE LETDOWN AFTER THE MURDER WAS SOLVED, AND WE WERE SLOWER THAN WE SHOULD HAVE BEEN IN PICKING UP THE TEMPO"

MARK FROST

➤ this going because that's sort of the MacGuffin that brought us into this world and doesn't necessarily need to be solved'. So we struck a compromise and solved it half way through that second season, and then we had to adjust on the fly and try to find a reason to keep the show going. That's the problem with shows like this, where you get a pick-up and it's so difficult to produce a full season of, say, 22 hours of TV. You're kind of looking at the bus that's just about to run you over because of deadlines, as opposed to looking way down the road to where you want the show to be in, say, nine months, so we didn't have the time that I felt we needed to fully prepare for the impact of ending the Laura story."

Indeed, while the mid-Season Two reveal of the identity of Laura's killer, as well as the exploration of supernatural elements within the woods of Twin Peaks rank as all-time great TV episodes, it's what came next that tore the storytelling apart. Without a major thrust to the drama, the core principles of the show disintegrated, leading to intolerable plotlines that saw one character, middle-aged Nadine Hurley (Wendy Robie), lose her mind and believe she was a high school cheerleader, while the sidekick of coffee-loving protagonist Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan), Sheriff Harry Truman (Michael Ontkean), becomes a temporary alcoholic in an unintentionally laughable fashion. Basically, *Twin Peaks* became burdened by the kind of implausible soapy storylines that it had previously subverted (though one entertaining exception arguably came in David Duchovny's

brilliant portrayal of Cooper's cross-dressing friend, Agent Dennis 'Denise' Bryson).

"We hit a little valley there in the storytelling process, which was kind of inevitable," Frost says. "The Laura Palmer story was so huge and formative in terms of how the show had proceeded and what people expected of it, so I think there was an inevitable letdown after the murder was solved, and we were probably a little slower than we should have been in picking up the tempo again. I think towards the end of the second season we hit our stride again, and the second major through line with Cooper and his nemesis Windom Earle really did, I think, get to an interesting place, but I'm the first to say yeah, there was a period where we did lose a little bit of our momentum."

The show did eventually find its footing in the final six episodes of Season Two, which would become the closing arc of the entire show. Lynch returned to the production, prompting weaker storylines that had played out for too long, including the increasingly irritating romance between Sheriff's deputy Andy (Harry Goaz) and receptionist Lucy (Kimmy Robertson) to be pushed to one side. The introduction of the Jack Nicholson Joker-esque Windom Earle (Kenneth Welsh) as Cooper's opposite and Annie Blackburn (Heather Graham) as his love interest changed the paradigm once more, as the supernatural elements of the 'Black Lodge' parallel dimension (the familiar *Twin Peaks* image of a room with red drapes and a black-and-white zig-zag floor) came to the fore again. It was mystery-



Twin Peaks introduced us to iconic characters like the enigmatic Log Lady (Catherine E Coulson).

based storytelling at its best, gradually bringing the always implied two worlds of our reality and the terrifyingly surreal Lodge together.

Suddenly, *Twin Peaks* mattered again, but it was too late; the audiences of the early Nineties had lost interest. It was their loss: the final episode, given the evocative title of 'Beyond Life And Death', was the first to be directed by Lynch since the identity of Laura Palmer's killer was revealed in the episode 'Lonely Souls'. With an extended, unscripted sequence that saw Cooper consumed by the Black Lodge while faced by the demonic entity BOB (Frank Silva), this frightening and jaw-dropping hour of



TWIN PEAKS FLASHBACK



UNSOLVED MYSTERIES OF TWIN PEAKS

The lingering questions that we've had to live with for 22 unsatisfying years

television may well be Lynch's finest work. After that, the show was canned, leaving us with an aching slew of unresolved cliffhangers (see 'Unsolved Mysteries Of *Twin Peaks*').

"Well, I know we were certainly geared up to do a third year," Frost explains when we ask him how long he and Lynch intended the show to go on for. "The number five always stuck in my head. I felt we had started something that – with our full attention – could have run for five seasons. It was what it was then, and who knows what will happen in the future, so we'll see."

Does that mean we're not done with *Twin Peaks*, then, 22 years on? "It's something we talk about from time to time," Frost answers. In the iconic dream sequence where Cooper meets the backwards-speaking dancing dwarf and sees the image of Laura Palmer, it's later stated that this is set 25 years in the future. Maybe we should check back with Frost in three years. "We talked about [Season Three] so long ago when we were actively planning that. I don't like to quote it because I'm afraid I'll mislead people because my memories of it are just a little bit fuzzy," Frost tells us. "But if we ever do decide to move forward I know we have a rich trove of material to draw from."

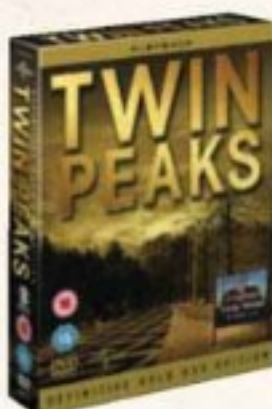
Twin Peaks would gain a life beyond TV, however, as Lynch directed the 1992 prequel/sequel hybrid *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*. Though it was panned at the time and bombed financially, the depiction of Laura Palmer's final days of life and descent into darkness – co-starring David Bowie, no less – has gained gradual acclaim over time. "I thought it was a brilliant way to both go forwards and backwards in time and extend the timeline of the mythology, and that's a film that I think has also grown in reputation over the years. There's a large chunk of the movie that's never been seen because David had to cut it down to a more manageable length for release. We're hoping that sometime in the next couple of years we're going to be able to release those scenes – there's about 45 minutes of

material, so that's something, with any luck, people will be able to see pretty soon."

This lost treasure trove of deleted scenes, painting a much wider picture of the titular town than we see in the finished cut, is a big talking point for fans to this day. But whether we see any unseen *Twin Peaks* footage again or not, the impact of the show is so expansive and pronounced that it will continue to be remembered as a milestone within its medium – not just for the idea of building a long-running show around one sole, narrative-defining mystery, but also the way it brought filmmaking values to the nascent paradigm of high-end TV drama.

We ask Frost which element of the show he's proudest of, looking back. "I think the fact that we made the show as a kind of solid state engineering. We had feature people working in all the departments, we took a lot of pride in making the show look like a movie and not a television show, we took great care in casting the show and making sure that we had the very best actors available playing those roles, and we were able to make the show we wanted to make.

"[There was a] unique degree of freedom from the network in making those sorts of decisions and, to their credit, they did not try to meddle creatively with what we were doing. That's a very rare experience in television, and you'd be hard pressed to find anything like that today in network television," Frost says. "We were lucky in that regard, and the fact that the show is still regarded in the way it is when most network television ends up being fairly disposable or a product of its time, I think is a testament to how hard we worked at maintaining that quality."



Mark Frost is the author of *The Paladin Prophecy*, available in paperback from Random House. The *Twin Peaks: Definitive Gold Box Edition* is out now on DVD, priced at £52.49.

How's Annie?

No, really, what happened to Annie? After Cooper saved her from the Black Lodge, it's said that she's okay, but does his love interest remember her horrific experience in the supernatural dimension? Presumably, Heather Graham's character would have had a key role in a potential third season.

Is Ben Horne seriously injured?

After a rough encounter with Doc Hayward (Warren Frost) over Donna's true parentage, Ben Horne (Richard Beymer) appears to be seriously injured by the usually benevolent physician as he smacks his head on a fireplace. It's a macabre scene, though we presume he's alright since the Doc appears later in the scene, but what actually happens next?

Who died in the bank explosion?

Audrey Horne (Sherilyn Fenn), Pete Martell (Jack Nance) and Andrew Packard (Dan O'Herlihy) are caught in an explosion at the Twin Peaks bank in the final episode – we never found out what happened to the beloved femme fatale or fish-loving Pete. These three characters will forever have an ambiguous fate.

Will Cooper escape BOB?

This is the big one. In the final episode, Cooper was possessed by the same demonic force that led Leland Palmer (Ray Wise) to kill his daughter – and, as our hero is shown to be corrupted by the ultimate evil in the closing seconds of *Twin Peaks*, the real Cooper was forever left trapped in the Black Lodge.

Just where is BOB from, anyway?

A few years ago, an unproduced *Twin Peaks* graphic novel project made a vague hint that BOB was from a planet made of creamed corn. It sounds like nonsense, even if it does dovetail with the details of the show, but we'd still like to learn a little more about where this intangible antagonist came from.

NEARLY 30 YEARS ON AND THE CHAOS THOSE UGLY CRITTERS WREAKED ON AMERICAN SUBURBIA IS STILL AS TALKED ABOUT AS ANY REAL HISTORICAL EVENT. IN THIS MONTH'S CLASSIC, WE SQUIRT THEM WITH WATER PISTOLS, TOSS THEM A CHICKEN LEG AND DRAW BACK THE CURTAINS ON GREMLINS...

WORDS JODIE TYLEY

GREMLINS



Film

RUNNING TIME:

106 minutes

RELEASE DATE: 1984

DIRECTOR: Joe Dante

WRITERS: Chris Columbus

CAST: Zach Galligan,

Pheobe Cates, Hoyt Axton,

Frances Lee McCain,

Corey Feldman

About

What do you buy the teenager who has everything? Randall (Hoyt Axton) takes a trip to Chinatown and finds an adorable fuzzy creature for his son's Christmas present. The wide-eyed Mogwai, who's christened 'Gizmo', goes down well, but his care instructions are too much for Billy (Zach Galligan) to digest. Spilling a glass of water on his new pet, Billy inadvertently unleashes all manner of chattering critters on the sleepy suburb of Kingston Falls. It turns out that the next evolutionary stage isn't as cute and furry; it's more scaly and scary. These are hailed 'the gremlins', and Billy must get rid of them all before they continue to multiply.

"Everyone's got a story to tell, but nobody's got a story like this one," says Randall Peltzer (Hoyt Axton). He's referring to the Christmas he spent cleaning gremlin goo from his kitchen walls – a story so original that when the script landed on Steven Spielberg's desk, he snapped up the rights faster than Jaws would a fishing boat. It was penned by Chris Columbus in the days before he turned director and helmed child-friendly classics like *Home Alone*, *Mrs Doubtfire* and the first two *Harry Potter* films. The combination of Columbus and Spielberg should have delivered another bouncing baby of a movie, especially since it was dressed in seasonal cheer; that is, until a glass of water is spilled and the whole thing descends into cert-15 territory.

Columbus was inspired by the noises that came from his loft at night. "What sounded like a platoon of mice would come out, and to hear them skittering in the blackness was really creepy," he admitted on the DVD's 'Behind The Scenes' featurette. Spielberg called it "one of the most original things I've come across in many years," but his workload meant he needed to find someone else to take on the responsibility of looking after the movie. Acting as executive producer, he drafted in Joe Dante, having been impressed by his work on horror/comedy *The Howling* (1981). The early drafts of the script veered more towards the former, as the gremlins ate Billy's dog and tossed his mother's decapitated head down the stairs. There was even a scene in McDonald's where they chowed down

on customers rather than burgers. These elements were scrapped in favour of a more family friendly feel, but the bedlam they reaped remained.

The concept of *Gremlins* was nothing new; pilots in the Royal Air Force had been blaming them since the Twenties for any mechanical faults. They became especially well-known in World War II for causing inexplicable problems with aircraft, but author Roald Dahl was the first to take the myth beyond the front line in his first children's novel, *The Gremlins* (1943). He was familiar with the fantasy beasts through serving with

"foreign piece of crap" car, saying they often had gremlins inside, "The same gremlins that brought down our planes in the big one [World War II]".

The leader of the bandits, Stripe, was originally meant to be Gizmo. In a screening of the film at the Royal Theatre in Los Angeles in 2008, Dante admitted it was Spielberg's idea to turn Giz into the star. "A couple of weeks before production, Spielberg said, 'You know, I think this Gizmo is pretty cute, and I think we should keep him alive for the whole movie.' We said 'What? He can't walk, he'll have to be carried around all the time,'" he said.

"GREMLINS IS OF THE MOST ORIGINAL THINGS I'VE COME ACROSS IN MANY YEARS"

STEVEN SPIELBERG

the military, and had his own run-in with the critters when he crash-landed in the Libyan Desert. It captured Walt Disney's imagination, and a series of short stories were written. They later appeared the *Twilight Zone* episode, 'Nightmare At 10,000 Feet', in which a gremlin attacks an airliner. However, Dante said his were a very different breed. "They're sort of green, and they have big mouths and they smile a lot, and they do incredibly, really nasty things to people, and enjoy it all the while," he commented. They certainly enjoyed tinkering with equipment, though, snapping Murray Futterman's TV antenna and driving his snow plow through his house. It seemed that the war veteran foresaw the danger, lecturing Billy on his

Since CGI wasn't available, a chunk of the \$11 million budget was spent making puppets, and the on-screen mayhem was governed by what they could and couldn't do. We all know Mogwai come with more care instructions than a dry clean-only garment – don't get them wet, expose them to bright light or feed them after midnight – and the director and crew found him just as demanding off-screen. "He was so hard to work with, and such a prima donna," says Dante. "He had all these gears on him and he would cost us a lot of time, so we would try and get our revenge by thinking up as many terrible predicaments to put him in. There were things in the movie that were suggested by the crew; we had a notepad with 'Terrible



Gremlins: critter feature or capitalism critique?



The gremlins were originally conceived as far more sinister than they turned out.



TOP 5 CUTEST MOMENTS

The scenes that made us all want a Gizmo NEW PET



Billy unwraps his Christmas present early and meets Gizmo for the very first time. The cute little critter blinks, chirrups, and is happy to be cradled like a baby. It's enough to make us melt – and want to slap the mother for nearly blinding him with a camera.

T GREMLINS WAS RELEASED IN JUNE WHEN WARNER BROS REALISED THEY HAD NO MAJOR COMPETITION FOR THE SUMMER SEASON.

GIZMO'S GOT TALENT



Billy and Gizmo start jamming together over a keyboard. It sparked a line of toy versions that will sing and sway when you clap your hands, but like all the heart-tugging scenes starring Gizmo, it ends with him in pain. Now we want to slap Billy for nearly blinding him with a mirror.

T COMPOSER JERRY GOLDSMITH WROTE GIZMO'S SONG, WHICH WAS HUMMED BY A CHILD ACTRESS RATHER THAN THE VOICE OF GIZMO, HOWIE MANDEL.

GREMLINS 3D



Gizmo looks at a comic with his new owner while wearing 3D glasses and mimics his master's Americanisms, mumbling, "cool" and "neat". The 3D trend was in its infancy, and the red and blue specs were seen multiple times throughout the film.

T BILLY BUYS A COMIC AT DR FANTASY'S – THE NICKNAME OF EXEC PRODUCER FRANK MARSHALL.

GAME OF DARTS



The gang team up against their maker and strap Gizmo to a dartboard. His yelps attract the attention of Billy's mother. With her kitchen under siege, she pounces on the little buggers, grinding one in a mixer and exploding another in the microwave.

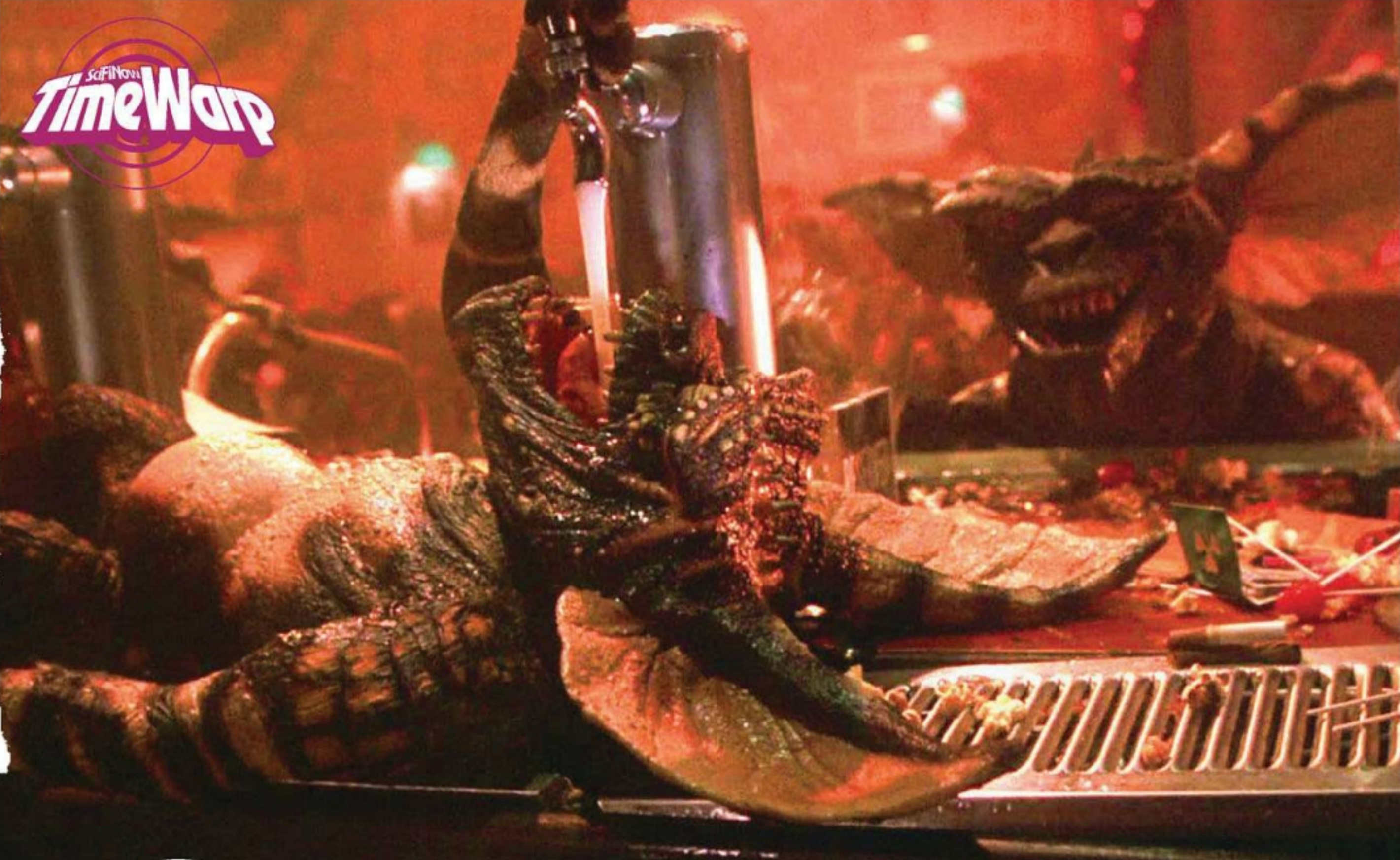
T THE SET FOR KINGSTON FALLS IS THE SAME ONE USED IN BACK TO THE FUTURE – BOTH ARE FILMED IN THE UNIVERSAL BACKLOT.

BEEP BEEP!



It's Gizmo's finest hour as he zooms to the rescue, driving a hot pink vehicle and nearly running over the family pooch. Presumably he picked up some motor skills through watching *To Please A Lady* earlier on, where he mimicked the race car driver. He even makes the 'beep' noises!

T ORIGINALLY, GIZMO AND BILLY PULLED A BLIND EACH TO KILL STRIPE, BUT SPIELBERG WANTED GIZMO TO BE THE HERO, SO IT WAS CHANGED.



things we can do to Gizmo today.' One of the things was to put him on a dartboard and have darts thrown at him."

The puppet master was Chris Walas, who demonstrated his skills on *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* (he was responsible for melting the Nazis) and acted as creature consultant on *Return Of The Jedi*. He created different sized puppets to better convey emotion in close-ups, and used nifty techniques to bring scenes like the birth of the gremlins to life. Balloons attached to air pumps were employed to grow the exploding balls of fur, and were later used for the scene where Billy's mother traps one in the microwave.

Providing the high-pitched squeaks and warbles for Giz was Howie Mandel, who's best known for presenting *Deal Or No Deal* in the US, and the gravelly, dirty snorts of Stripe were provided by Frank Welker, the voice of Scooby-Doo. They spoke their own language with one or two English words thrown in, like Gizmo's cries of "Bright light!" which Mandel learned to speak in various languages for foreign audiences, and they even sang – most notably in the scene where the gremlins pretend to be Christmas carol singers.

"While we were making the movie, we discovered the gremlins were kind of funny," said Dante, "and if you put funny

clothes on them and had them do funny things then they were pretty satirical, so the movie moved away from being a horror picture and became more of a comedy, and it was all puppetry."

The titular menaces were the ones we will always remember, but the human cast gave us characters to identify with. The relatively unknown (then and now) Zach Galligan was picked for the part of Billy, the teen who can't follow the three simple rules. His love interest was the wholesome Kate (Phoebe Cates), who caused some controversy with her anecdote about the time her father dressed as Santa and broke his neck climbing down the chimney. The studio wanted to leave the scene on the cutting room floor, but Dante insisted it represented the film's horrific yet comedic tone. But watching it back as an adult, you realise there's an undercurrent of corporate capitalism.

"GIZMO WAS SO HARD TO WORK WITH, AND SUCH A PRIMA DONNA" JOE DANTE

THE NEW BATCH

Parodies of Gremlins in pop culture

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THE GOONIES (1985)

Chunk calls Sheriff Steinbrenner to report a murder, but he recognises him. Chunk pleads he's telling the truth, but the Sheriff is having none of it. "Just like the last prank about all those little creatures that multiply when you pour water on them," he retorts.



T WHILE RECORDING FOR THE GOONIES DVD, SEAN ASTIN HAD TO DEPART MID-WAY. HE LEFT A SAMWISE GAMGEE FIGURE IN HIS PLACE.

HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER #1.12 (2006)

Womaniser Barney tells Ted that the rules of dating are the same for gremlins: never get them wet (don't let them take a shower); keep them away from sunlight (don't see them in the day) and never feed them after midnight (don't let her sleep over and have breakfast).



T THERE ARE PLENTY OF BUFFY REFERENCES THANKS TO ALYSON HANNIGAN, WHO STARRED AS WILLOW.

THE BIG BANG THEORY #3.4 (2009)

There's not much that baffles super-geek Sheldon, but *Gremlins* has him stumped. When the gang watch it, he wonders, "The instructions are very clear; don't feed the gremlins after midnight, don't get the gremlins wet... how hard is that?"



T IN ANOTHER SPIELBERG REFERENCE, SHELDON IS CHASED FROM A THEATRE IN A HOMAGE TO *RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK*.

Gizmo's cuddly appeal was noted by Steven Spielberg, who made him the hero of the piece.



Characters like money-minded harridan Ms Deagle (Polly Holliday), with cats named after currency, and the selfish and greedy Gerald Hopkins (Judge Reinhold) are reminders that "the world's changing and you got to change with it." Mr Futterman's constant jibes at foreign technology recalls the economic climate at the time of the Reagan era.

Gremlins is also packed with references to the filmmakers' pasts. On the cinema you'll spot two of the working titles for Spielberg's *ET* and *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*: 'A Boy's Life' and 'Watch The Skies'. Look closer in the scene where Gizmo is interacting with another Mogwai through a box and you'll spot a sketch of *Jaws*; and when Randall calls home from a convention, Dante and Spielberg out-do themselves with the number of things they cram in. In the front of the shot, the Beard himself is riding a bike; composer Jerry

Goldsmith is in a phone booth wearing a Stetson; Robby the Robot from *Forbidden Planet* (1956) moves across the screen and in the background the titular device from *The Time Machine* (1960) is there one minute before vanishing the next. None of it takes away from the watching experience, but it's in keeping with the mismatched tone of the film. Is it a social commentary or a silly romp in the vein of Dante's later work, *Small Soldiers*?

The secret to success is to have both: entertainment and hidden agendas that give fans meat to pick apart. Columbus' story certainly ends on a thought-provoking note: "So, if your air conditioner goes on the fritz or your washing machine blows up or your video recorder conks out... turn on all the lights, check all the cupboards and look under the beds. 'Cause you never can tell, there just might be a gremlin in your house..."

THE NEW BATCH

The story of the second movie

Warner Bros wanted to pour water all over the first movie for it to multiply into a multi-million dollar success, but director Joe Dante refused. He felt *Gremlins* had a conclusive ending, so the studio continued without him.

Potential storylines could have let the gremlins loose on Las Vegas or even Mars, but nothing grabbed them, so they wound up going back to Dante. They granted him complete creative control – a rarity in Hollywood – and he agreed to return.

Screenwriter Charlie Haas came up with the idea of moving Billy and Kate to New York, starting jobs at the Clamp Corporation as a cost-cutting solution to the problem of having critters taking over NYC.

It was lighter than the first instalment, spoofing movies like *Rambo*, *The Wizard Of Oz* and, most notably, the first *Gremlins* film.

Gremlins 2: The New Batch wasn't the money-maker Warner had hoped for, coming in at number 31 on the highest-grossing films of 1990, but Dante liked it the best.

WHY IS GREMLINS A MODERN CLASSIC?

THE THREE RULES

Nearly 30 years on, and the rules are still a pop culture reference that everyone gets. They've been referenced in the likes of *The Simpsons* and *Family Guy*, and director Joe Dante even acknowledged them in his subsequent film, *Small Soldiers*.

IT'S A HORR-EDY

Gremlins was one of the first horror-comedies in the early Eighties, along with *Ghostbusters*, *An American Werewolf In London* and *Fright Night*. They struck a healthy balance, making the beasts just the right amount of scary before dressing them in bobble hats and scarves.

AWARD-WINNING SOUNDTRACK

Legendary composer Jerry Goldsmith created the film's score and won a Saturn Award for Best Music. The aim was to achieve "the mischievous humour and mounting suspense of gremlins" and the famous 'dah dah dah' tune nails the brief.

GIZMO

The cutest of the critters was granted a reprieve by Spielberg, and toy sellers were glad he did. There's even a Scottish post-rock band named after him.

(LACK OF) SPECIAL EFFECTS

The pinnacle of the special effects? Fake snow on the backlot of Universal Studios in California. It gives the movie a classic, timeless feel, and if it was remade with CGI today then *Gremlins* would be worse off for it.

JACK FROST 2 (2000)

This straight-to-DVD horror/comedy is so bad it's cult. The evil snowballs are just as troublesome and dangerous as gremlins, but a blender doesn't work on Jack Frost's hatchlings. There's also a snowball that sports a Mohawk of icicles, just like Stripe.



T STRIPE IS VOICED BY FRANK WELKER, WHO ALSO PLAYED THE PART OF MEGATRON FROM *TRANSFORMERS*.

FAMILY GUY #5.11 (2007)

After allowing Stewie to get sunburnt, Peter's wife Lois scolds him, saying it was just like the time he fed his Mogwai after midnight. A cutaway scene shows Peter feeding Gizmo a chicken leg, causing him to turn into nasally New Yorker Fran Drescher.



T ONE OF THE MOST REFERENCED FILM FRANCHISES IN *FAMILY GUY* IS *STAR WARS*, HAVING DEDICATED ENTIRE EPISODES TO IT.



THE TIMEWARP CHARMED QUIZ

WERE YOU UNDER THE SPELL OF THE HALLIWELL SISTERS? IF YOU THINK YOU KNOW YOUR PIPER FROM YOUR PHOEBE, PAIGE AND PRUE, TAKE THIS QUIZ TO DISCOVER IF YOU ARE WELL AND TRULY CHARMED

HALLIWELL 101

- 1| What was the title of the very first episode?
a) 'Be Careful What You Witch For'
b) 'Something Wicca This Way Comes'
c) 'The Witch Is Back'
- 2| Name the incredibly catchy opening theme song and the band.
- 3| What was that weird, circular logo actually called?
- 4| Name the first witch, who prophesied the arrival of the Charmed Ones?
- 5| How did Patty (the Halliwell sisters' mother) die?

SISTER STUFF

- 6| Name all three of the original sister's powers.
- 7| How many times did Prue Halliwell die?
- 8| What colour was Paige's hair in Season Five?
- 9| What hasn't Phoebe turned into?
a) Banshee b) Mermaid c) Cat
- 10| Who is the only sister to continue the tradition of giving their children a name beginning with P?

MEET THE BOYFRIEND

- 11| What three job roles has Leo Wyatt had before becoming mortal?
- 12| What alias did Cole Turner go by when he was a demonic assassin?

- 13| Who do the Elders send to help Phoebe find love?
- 14| What is the name of the parole officer that Paige marries?
- 15| Which witch fell pregnant first?

POWER OF THREE

- 16| Name the family heirloom that contains centuries of witchy know-how.
- 17| What relation was Paige to the Halliwell sisters?
- 18| Which sister said this: "I curse you, you curse me, let's get together and do a little cursing"?
- 19| Phoebe always had the tamest power, but what others did she eventually gain?
- 20| Which sister was turned into a dog?

DIDN'T HE/SHE DO WELL! See how you did with our arbitrary scoring system



16-20

PHOEBE HALLIWELL

You're not just the sexy one; you're also the smart one. Demons tried to distract you from your studies, but you graduated in Psychology and, more importantly, passed this quiz.



11-15

LEO WYATT

Loyal, dependable and a little dull, you helped the sisters out of demonic dilemmas throughout *Charmed*'s eight seasons. We all knew there was more to you than a handyman who fixed chandeliers by levitating.



6-10

COLE TURNER

Smouldering looks and a wicked nature kept Phoebe and viewers hooked. Sometimes you knew all the answers, and at others you looked like a poor man's Darth Maul. You could ace this quiz on a better day.



0-5

BILLIE JENKINS

You arrived when *Charmed* was on its last legs in a desperate bid to cast a youth spell and make it hip again. The hex backfired, though, and the lame missing-sis storyline cursed the final season.

ANSWERS: 1 B) SOMETHING WICCA THIS WAY COMES 2 HOW SOON IS NOW BY LOVER SPIT LOVE 3 TRIQUETRA 4 MELINDA WARREN 5 A WATER DEMON KILLED HER 6 PREMONITION, TELEKINESIS, FREEZING 7 THREE GINGER 8 CAT 9 C) CAT 10 PHOEBE 11 WHITTAKER, ELDER, AVATAR 12 BELTHAZOR 13 CLIPID (COOP) 14 HENRY MITCHELL 15 PIPER 16 THE BOOK OF SHADOWS 17 HALF-SISTER 18 PHOEBE 19 LEVITATION IN SEASON THREE AND EMPATHY IN SEASON SIX 20 PRUE

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Coming Distractions

The best collectables in the weeks ahead

Cliffjumper

Inspired by the CGI show *Transformers Prime*, this is no ordinary version of Autobots Cliffjumper – yes it's a deluxe version, and yes, it's a first edition toy, but the real news is that this is a variant edition marking bot's stint as a zombie-like Terrorcon in the show.

www.kapowtoys.com
£19.99

Batman Deluxe Figures

Inspired by popular series *Batman: Hush*, these deluxe Batman and Joker figures from

Medicom have been sculpted at sixth scale from Jim Lee designs, and feature all the detail you'd expect from the line – including realistic costumes and a wide range of articulation.

www.play.com
£149.99 each

T-1000 Figure

Neca's latest wave of *Terminator* figures includes this take on the T-1000, in the guise of a motorcycle cop, but frozen with liquid nitrogen, which features special decoration and paint effects to achieve that 'just frozen' look. We bet he'd melt in a smelter, too.

www.play.com £13.99

Predator 2 Figure

This SDCC 2012 exclusive figure is something of an original – this city hunter

Predator is cloaked, hence its semi-translucent state. It's also fully poseable with 25 points of articulation, and comes complete with extendable wrist blades and an exclusive skull trophy.

www.play.com £21.49



HOBBITUAL COLLECTOR

Take an unexpected journey to where Tolkien's fantasy epic began

It's not often that a Hollywood-standard special effects studio will go to such lengths as recreating pieces of the movies for fans in-house, but that's exactly what New Zealand-based Weta Workshop has continued to do for film series, including *The Lord Of The Rings* and *The Chronicles Of Narnia*, as well as individual outings like *District 9* and *King Kong*.

The Peter Jackson connection to Weta has been strong ever since the latter worked on the practical effects for Jackson's debut, *Bad Taste*. That relationship will continue with *The Hobbit* movies, and Weta has wasted no time in making dozens of collectables and screen-accurate props a reality for fans. All of the following pieces can be bought direct from Weta's online store,

but are also available via numerous other stores, so it's worth shopping around.

First up is Hobbit hero Bilbo Baggins, the subject of a sixth-scale statue which features the likeness of Martin Freeman in a sword-wielding pose atop a base. He is joined in similar style by Dwarf warrior Thorin Oakenshield, a survivor of the dragon Smaug's destruction of the kingdom of Erebor. He is also depicted in an action pose – elven blade, Orcrist in hand – and is almost ten inches tall. Rounding out this fellowship is Gandalf, returning in classic style with sweeping gowns, wizard's staff and iconic (and optional) hat. All the statues are available as part of an open edition.

Weta's forte is props and effects, however, and *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*

PRECIOUS PLUSH

Funko ups the Hobbit's cute factor

We've featured Funko's plush and vinyl wares before, but it's not often the company lavishes both treatments on a franchise in such a big way. *The Hobbit* is no ordinary property, however, and the book/movie's three key players have each been lovingly realised in both cuddly and solid form. Gandalf and Bilbo we can live with, but Gollum's figure has looks only an Uruk-Hai could love.

www.forbiddenplanet.com £8.99 each

has an embarrassment of screen-accurate riches. Gollum's precious, the One Ring, gets a new take made of 18 carat gold-plated tungsten, which comes in its own display box made of cherry timber, while Thorin's key to Erebor is also available, cast from zinc alloy using the original prop's moulds.

Other Middle-Earthen artefacts include the brilliant 'contract of Bilbo Baggins', a substantial, rolled-up document that governs the hobbit's conditions of engagement, and is completely hand-aged and assembled by Daniel Reeve, the artist that made the movie original. Turns out there are some things that money can buy. Bringing up the rear is Thorin's map, also created by Reeve, which is aged and reveals moon runes when held up to the light.

1. Bilbo statue www.wetanz.com \$199 (approx £124) 2. Thorin statue www.wetanz.com \$249 (approx £155)
3. Gandalf statue www.wetanz.com \$249 (approx £155) 4. One Ring www.wetanz.com \$99 (approx £62) 5. Erebor key www.wetanz.com \$29.99 (approx £19)
6. Bilbo's Contract www.wetanz.com \$449 (approx £279) 7. Thorin's map www.wetanz.com \$199 (approx £124)

BLOCK BUSTERS

Lego licensing pieces start falling into place

New licensed Lego still gets us unreasonably excited, and a couple of recently revealed sets are no exception. As well as a new set in the DC Super Heroes range – Arkham Asylum no less, which comes with more figures than you can shake a brick at – we're finally getting *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* Lego, based on the Nickelodeon toon. The first set includes two of the team and other fan-favourite characters.

shop.lego.com both sets TBC



TOP
TEN

GAME OF THRONES

We showcase the best wares the Seven Kingdoms has to offer...



1 Ned Stark Figure

Despite being officially licensed merchandise, Funko Pop! figures generally don't look a lot like their counterparts. Here, however, they buck the trend, with their Ned Stark looking exactly like Sean Bean. Or maybe it's just us...

www.forbiddenplanet.com £8.99



2 Westeros Mugs

We've been saying for years that the best place to display a map of a huge fantasy continent is on a mug. No, really. This set goes two better, spreading the full cartography of Westeros across three stackable beverage holders. You'd be a mug not to get them...

www.play.com £19.99



3 Fire and Blood Perfume

You'll probably want to try before you buy this Daenerys Targaryen-inspired scent. Packaged in a dragon egg-style bottle, the fragrances include green grass, leather, exotic flowers and dragons' blood.

www.thinkgeek.com £74.99 (approx £47)



4 Littlefinger Pin

No, not another Mockingjay; this is Dark Horse's replica of the Mockingbird pin worn by professional gossip and political manoeuvrer, Petyr Baelish. Littlefinger is one fan's love to hate, so alternatively get the 'hand of the king' pin instead.

www.forbiddenplanet.com £13.99



5 Game of Thrones board game

Designed for five players but playable with three, this strategy game is based on George RR Martin's original novels and pits players as heads of feuding houses, moving armies and double-dealing with each other in a bid to sit on the Iron Throne.

www.firebox.com £49.99



6 Tyrion Statue

The diminutive Lannister is immortalised in polystone courtesy of Dark Horse in a sculpt inspired by the Battle of Blackwater, as imagined in the second season of HBO's TV show. Features the likeness of Peter Dinklage and screen-accurate armour detailing.

www.forbiddenplanet.com £99.99



7 Coaster Set

Turn your coffee table into an analogy of Westeros with the second wave of coasters inspired by the series' various families. This set features the sigils of Houses Arryn (a moon and a falcon), Tyrell (a golden rose), Greyjoy (a kraken) and Tully (a trout).

www.play.co.uk from £9.49



8 Mini Iron Throne

What everyone in *Game Of Thrones* is trying to get their hands/backside on – it'd be much easier to simply order this mini replica, which is half the height (and a sixth of the price) of the 14-inch version. The mini one is based on the same sculpt.

www.forbiddenplanet.com £39.99



9 Direwolf Bookends

Based on the guardian statues in the crypt beneath Winterfell, these bookends represent the oversized, intelligent and possibly supernatural beasts on House Stark's sigil. The question is, can your book shelf handle a pair of Direwolves?

www.bigbadtoystore.com \$69.99 (approx £44)



10 Daenerys Targaryen Figure

Another in the Pop! figure range, Daenerys represents House Targaryen with her flowing gold locks and small dragon Rhaegal depicted in vinyl. The mother of dragons is almost four inches tall.

www.forbiddenplanet.com £8.99

GAME BREAKER

The month's best game-related collectables



BioShock Infinite Skyhook

The game may not even be out yet, but *BioShock Infinite*'s steam-punk stylings are heading to the real world, too, courtesy of this replica skyhook – used in-game to evade/cause destruction by zipping around the turn-of-the-century floating city of Columbia.

www.forbiddenplanet.com £76.99



Companion Cube Lunch Tin

Portal's loveable, if conspicuously inanimate companion cubes move onward and upwards with yet another tie-in product. Aperture Science's loyal side-kick can now store all kinds of goodies in the form of this lunch tin. Who'd have thought a box would be so popular?

www.forbiddenplanet.com £13.50



Shepard Bishoujo Statue

Kotobukiya is at it again, turning western favourites into anime-inspired bishoujo figures. This time around it's *Mass Effect* hero Commander Shepard, depicted here in femshep guise with N7 armour and swappable M55 Argus Rifle and omni-blade weapons.

www.forbiddenplanet.com £49.99

PROP SHOP

Bringing the movies home

Dredd Badge

Judge Dredd is back on the big screen, and now you can clean up the streets of Mega-City One with your very own Judge's badge. This full-size scale replica is made from solid metal, is gold-plated and comes with its very own display stand to remind perps you are the law.

www.forbiddenplanet.com £79.99



Cap Posters

The first Avenger is remembered here during his days as a World War II hero in the propaganda-style posters from the *Captain America* movie. Each is seen on-screen during a different part of the movie, and were created using Marvel's original digital files. We have a strange urge to buy some war bonds...

www.efxcollectibles.com \$20 each (approx £12)



HAL 9000

No, not a Bang & Olufsen remote control; Artfactory has recreated one of the most iconic science-fiction villains of all time with this aluminium take on 2001: A Space Odyssey's malevolent AI.

HAL. Created from the studio blueprints, HAL can repeat 15 phrases and features a replica lens based on the original prop.

www.bigbadtoystore.com \$499.99 (approx £311)



Source Code Book

Ever feel like your life is repeating itself over and over? If you're not Bill Murray in *Groundhog Day*, try writing down your experiences in this book/Filofax which, fittingly enough, was seen on-screen in the possession of Michelle Monaghan's Christina. Deja-who?

www.premiereprops.com \$399.99 (approx £249)

GEEK CHIC

The latest in sci-fi paraphernalia



Batman Hoodie

Where did they get that wonderful hoodie? That's the question your nemeses will be asking after you've faced them in this brilliant Batman hoodie, which comes complete with a cowl and built-in utility belt.

www.superherostuff.com \$44.99 (approx £28)



Portal Jacket

If you've ever felt like a test subject then make it official with this cool jacket inspired by Valve's Aperture Science labs from the *Portal* series, with colour scheme and logos to boot. There's cake in the pockets. We're not lying.

www.forbiddenplanet.com £44.99



Superman Tee

We can't get enough of the classic 'S' logo, and even though it isn't emblazoned on the chest of this tee Sloth-from-the-Goonies-style, the cool red, black and blue image of Supes more than makes up for it.

www.forbiddenplanet.com £17.99



They Live Tee

John Carpenter's cult classic aliens-in-society movie is the inspiration here for the latest sci-fi offering from Last Exit to Nowhere, which simply carries the entirely believable logo of the nefarious station Cable 54.

www.lastexittonowhere.com £18



Star Trek Catan

Strategy board game *Settlers Of Catan* gets a full *Star Trek* conversion, which keeps the original gameplay while adding new elements. Redesigned pieces, new support cards and loads more equals fun between three and four players, logically.

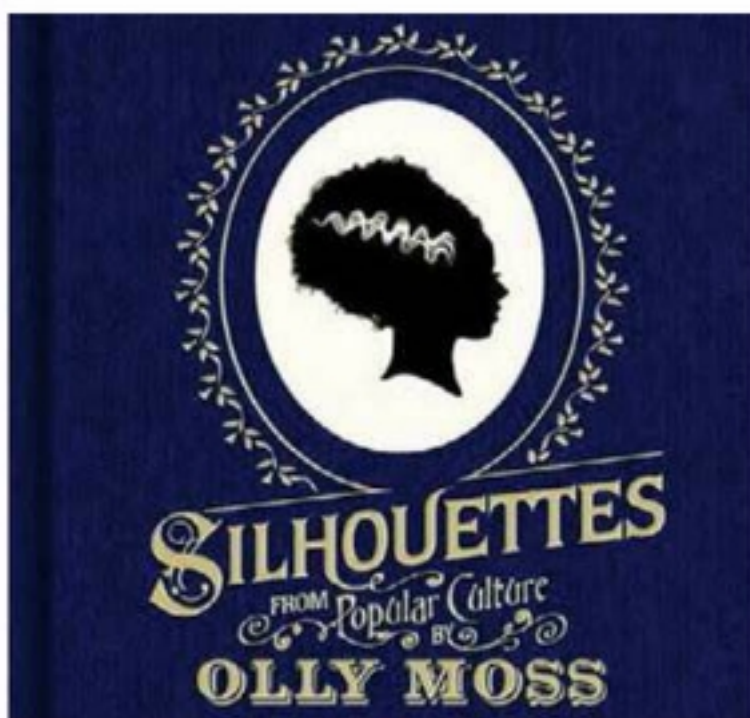
www.firebox.com £44.99



Firefly Poster

The *Serenity* takes centre stage in this stylish glossy poster print by artist Jeff Halsey, which marks the tenth Anniversary of Joss Whedon's fan favourite, *Firefly*. The slogan "You can't take the sky from me" and Mal's finale speech top things off.

www.thinkgeek.com \$19.99 (approx £12)



Silhouettes From Popular Culture

Minimalist designer Olly Moss goes from strength to strength, and in his first book art fans will find all of the Victorian-style silhouette portraits that made up Moss' debut gallery show. Can you identify them all?

www.amazon.co.uk £9.46



DC Dog Collars

Is your pooch moonlighting as a superpowered crime fighter or billionaire vigilante? If so – or at the very least you have your suspicions – furnish your pet with a Batman or Wonder Woman collar for that final bit of encouragement.

www.thinkgeek.com \$24.99 (approx £15)



Star Trek Cycling Jersey

Not an obvious combination, this. If you're female, enjoy cycling and are a big fan of all things *Trek* then this is for you. At least we hope so, because no one else will be interested. Includes Vulcan phrasing.

www.thinkgeek.com \$79.99 (approx £49)

DUNGEONS R US

Dungeon crawling for all the family

As **dungeon crawlers** continue to grow in popularity, the game which kickstarted the genre back in 1975 is receiving a fresh new airing for the benefit of a new generation of gamers.

Bar a few rule changes, *Dungeon!* is pretty much identical to the game

which first appeared nearly 30 years ago. Set in the *Dungeons & Dragons* universe, players get to choose from one of four core archetypes: fighter, wizard, rogue and cleric. Each hero has different strengths and weaknesses, and must explore a dungeon to retrieve a set

amount of treasure. Wizards, for example, are weak in combat, but have the ability to fling awesome spells, while rogues are far more likely to discover the secret doors found throughout the dungeon.

The dungeon board itself is split into six colour-coded levels, with the higher levels

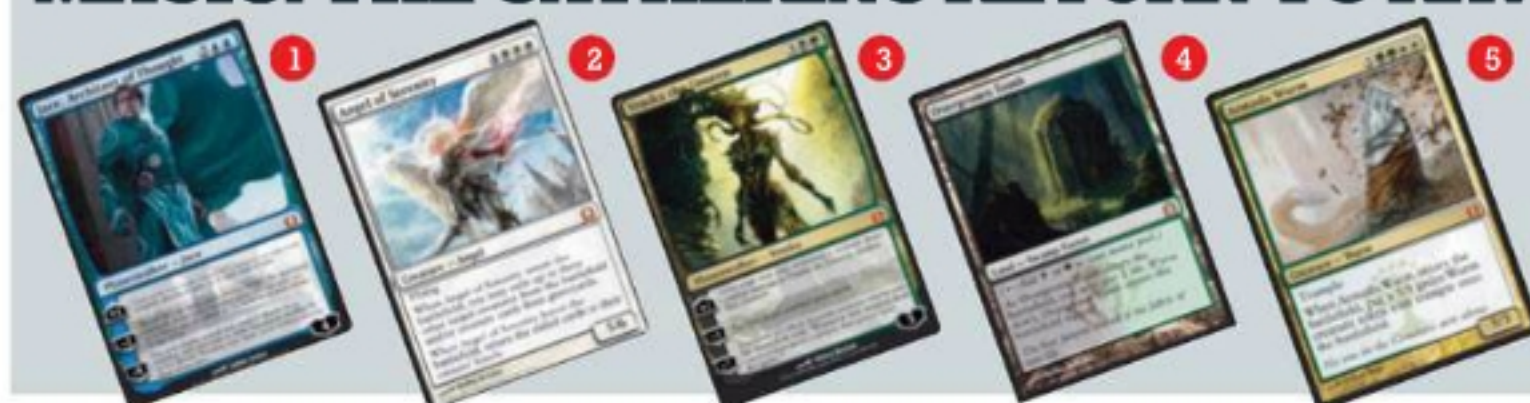
featuring stronger monsters and better treasure. The turn structure has a player moving up to six spaces, after which they have an encounter should they end up in a room or chamber. Encounters require flipping a monster card from the relevant part of the dungeon and then using two dice to match or beat the score of the relevant monster (values change depending on which character you use). Succeed, and you earn a treasure card; fail and you'll be attacked.

Dungeon! is an incredibly simplistic game that will hold little interest to more seasoned board gamers. It is, however, the perfect introduction for younger gamers, and is a good gateway into the surprisingly diverse genre that is the dungeon crawler.

Dungeon!
Publisher: Wizards Of The Coast
Players: 1-8
RRP: £16.99



MAGIC: THE GATHERING RETURN TO RAVNICA



TOP FIVE

- 1 Jace, Architect Of Thought £31
- 2 Angel Of Serenity £22
- 3 Vraska The Unseen £17
- 4 Overgrown Tomb £15
- 5 Armada Wurm £13

ZOMBIE NATION

So many zombies, so little time

Starting off life as a Kickstarter project,

Zombicide features some of the most stunning character models we've ever seen. The rest of the presentation is top notch, easily justifying its high price tag.

Zombicide is a fully co-operative game for 1-6 players that is as punishing as it is fun to play. As with many co-op games, the difficulty level is very high, meaning players need to really work together in order to stand any hope of survival. Turns see players having a limited amount of action points that can be used to do anything from opening doors, searching for additional weapons or attacking zombies. As more zombies are killed, players level up and gain more skills, which triggers even more dangerous attacks.

Filled with clever mechanics – making too much noise attracts nearby zombies – *Zombicide* is the board game equivalent of a videogame horde mode. Miss it at your peril.

Publisher: Guillotine Games Players: 1-6 RRP: £69.99



DO YOU REMEMBER?

DOOM: THE BOARD GAME

Escaping the videogame

Some people thought it was impossible to turn id Software's fast-paced first-person shooter into a brilliant board game. Those people were wrong.

While *Doom*'s instructions took a little while to grasp, the end result was an excellent adaptation of the popular franchise, which captured all the key elements of the series while adding plenty of fresh new ideas.

Players could level up between scenarios, while a clever dice system used different combos of die to reflect the many

different weapons found in the series, from pistols to the shotgun.

Factor in some fantastically designed figurines and lush board pieces, and *Doom* was a triumph that proved that even the most unlikely of adaptations can work if they're given a bit of thought.



CLASSIC CARD SETS

Essential collectables from Ash Trading Cards



Foiled force

Chase card sets are always worth seeking out, and this fine offering by acclaimed artist Joe Corroney is no exception. Taken from the fourth *Star Wars Galaxy* series, the etched foil cards join together to form an epic image of the saga, featuring everyone from Han Solo to the Emperor. This gorgeous six-card set is available for just £9.95.



Cloned Cards

The Clone Wars is a prominent part of *Star Wars* canon, and there's no better way to celebrate it than to revisit the original movie. The 90-card basic set features cool poses of all the key characters, as well as classic moments from the hit film. A small outlay of £8.95 allows you to relive all those precious moments whenever you feel like it.



Heroes and villains

The *Star Wars* universe has an amazing array of charismatic heroes and villainous foes, and we're delighted to see that the very best are in this excellent chase set. The 15-card set covers all six movies and features everyone from Luke Skywalker to Darth Maul. Drawn by Randy Martinez and finished off with etched foil, they're deserving of their £9.95 price tag.

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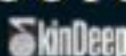
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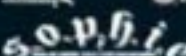
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